THE PARTICIPATORY WE-SELF:

ETHNICITY AND MUSIC IN NORTHERN THAILAND

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ABSTRACT

The 20th century consolidation of Bangkok's central rule over the northern Lanna kingdom and its outliers significantly impacted and retrospectively continues to shape regional identities, influencing not just *khon mueang* northerners but also ethnic highlanders including the Karen, Akha, Lahu, and others. Scholars highlight the importance and emergence of northern Thai "Lanna" identity and its fashioning via performance, specifically in relation to a modernizing and encroaching central Thai state, yet northern-focused studies tend to grant highland groups only cursory mention. Grounded in ethnographic field research on participatory musical application and Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi's notion of "flow", this dissertation examines four case studies of musical engagements in the north as it specifically relates to ethnic, political, and autoethnographic positioning, narratives, and group formulation. In examining the inclusive and exclusive participatory nature of musical expression within various ethnic and local performances in the north, I show how identity construction and social synchrony, achieved via "flow," sit at the heart of debates over authenticity, continuity, and ethnic destiny. This especially happens within and is complicated by the process of participatory musical traditions, where Thongchai Winichakul's "we-self" is felt, synchronized, distinguished, and imagined as extending beyond the local performance in shared musical space across borders and through time—even as the "other" is present and necessary for the distinguishing act of ethnic formalization. Though wide-ranging differences persist among the many ethnic groups of the north, they share a common resistance to central "Thainess" and construct this via participatory musical engagement. Regional, local, indigenous, or ethnic identities here are thus formulated through *sanuk*, the enjoyment of participation, a process of "flow" that enables strong emotional bonds while also potentially exposing communities as fragile, ambiguous, and negotiable.

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Introduction

Northern Thailand has a diverse population of ethnic enclaves—including the dominant Thai-Yuan (known as Northern Thai, *khon mueang*, or Lanna-Thai), Karen, Lahu, Lisu, Hmong, Mien, Lao, Shan, Thai Yai, Akha, Jin Haw, and others—but they also share one thing in common: they are not central Thai, not people of Bangkok. The reasons for and means of projection of this "Greater Lanna identity" (McGraw 134), where any resident of the north can claim and perform *khon mueang* identity, are many. The public, performative, and participatory nature of music offers an exceptional means for investigating the construction, projection, and consolidation of alternative identities. My aim in this ethnography is to shed light on ethnic formalization among these various ethnic groups in northern Thailand and to apply, critique, and expand upon Thomas Turino's concept of "participatory music" (2008) as it pertains to local, ethnic, and indigenous identity in this region.

Northern Thailand, formally consisting of a conglomeration of *mueang*[1] polities and contemporarily remembered as a united Lanna Kingdom, has long been viewed as the rebellious north, and a conflict between the modern urban center and the rural backward periphery has gained more attention since the overthrow of Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra (himself hailing from Chiang Mai) in 2006 and the continuing "red shirt" protests and political upheavals of the last decade (Johnson 2011; Buchanan 2013). Though a formal secession from the nation of Thailand is improbable, there have been renaissance movements since the 1970s in the north directed at reclaiming identity, language, heritage and regional pride (Akins 2013; Renard 1999). Some argue that central Thai multi-cultural policies and commercial rather than activist enterprises drive these kinds of expression (Jory 1999; Thongchai 1995; Moro 2004; Ferguson 2010) while others ascribe more agency to northern Thai actors taking charge of their own

identity (Akins and Bussakorn 2011; Ubonrat 1990; Jonsson 2001). Neither camp disputes that an ongoing exhibition of local identity continues to impact residents of the north, both outwardly in relation and response to the Thai nation and internally among their own communities.

My research thus finds its impetus in contestation and politics between the center and the margins of the nation. I am not on a quest for agency at any cost in the James Scott tradition (2009), but I do sense that the commercial and tourist aspect of "Lanna chic" has been emphasized to the point of negating real statements of nostalgia, memory, and purpose of northern, non-central identity. Musical expression of northern identity *may* be a capitalization on a profitable, cosmopolitan nostalgia (Ferguson 2010: 237). However, it also arose after a century of central colonization, censorship, and mockery of northern expression (McGraw 2007; Renard 1999) and continued prejudicial statements of northerners and highland ethnic groups as backward and uncivilized country bumpkins in need of civilization and an upgrade to "first-class citizenship" (Hoare 1992: 168; also Buchanon 2013: 64; Pine 2008: 224). This study includes, as background, ethnomusicological discourse on nationalism and identity—borrowing ideas from scholars such as Turino (2008; 2000), Bohlman (1989), and Stokes (1994)—that recognizes music as an artifact that is humanly signified, encoded with meaning, and politically positioned and performed to publicize and radiate varied meanings to, through, and for bonded and imagined communities. And while the central Thai state operates as a significant other against which varied northern self-validating "we-selves" are contrastingly or "negatively identified" (Thongchai 1994:5), the participatory nature of the musics employed to build, spread, and even *imagine* these larger ethnic collectives is of particular importance. For this, Thomas Turino's work (2008) on music and social life, most notably his combination of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's notion of "flow" (1990) with mass participation in music, offers a unique

window into performative group formation through participation.

Csikszentmihalyi describes "flow" as:

> optimal experience: a sense that one's skills are adequate to cope with the challenges at hand, in a goal-directed, rule-bound action system that provides clear clues as to how well one is performing. Concentration is so intense that there is no attention left over to think about anything irrelevant, or to worry about problems. Self-consciousness disappears, and the sense of time becomes distorted. (71)

Csikszentmihalyi's "flow state" is a psychological condition of intense, focused attention where the task at hand monopolizes the mind's concentration, leaving no room for the processing of the self's consciousness, time, or other worries that normally creep in during states of psychic entropy (1990: 28, 53-58). The paradoxical result of the self being sidelined is a stronger emergent sense of self and stronger feeling of connection to the world and the goals of larger entities one unites with when in a communally-encountered flow state (41, 62-63). On the whole, Csikszentmihalyi's text focuses on individual achievement, but it does at times point to flow experienced in groups, including dance and music venues (99, 110), saying the sense of control and order afforded by a goal-oriented task that balances (and can be adjusted for) the task's challenge with one's skill level can encourage the loss of self (lost in focused mental activity) *within* the group collective, leaving the individual feeling they are part of or distilled into the larger collective or movement. As applied to religious, political, or ethnic movements, he notes that they "offer opportunities for self-transcendence that millions are eager to accept. They also provide a welcome extension of the boundaries of the self, a feeling that one is involved in something great and powerful" (65).

In the field of ethnomusicology, "Flow" was first mentioned in Herndon and McLeod's *Music as Culture* (1982:191) as a possibly rich area for ethnomusicology to invest in, and

various scholars studying Africa had been describing what Ruth Stone termed "inner time," a notion of music performance as set apart from the ticking clock (2005: 89-91). Turino capitalized on the potentials of flow for group identity in *Music as Social Life* (2008) by pairing it with "participatory" music, an inclusive and adjustable approach to music making that accounts for all skill levels. Here, the novice as well as the professional musician have equal means for achieving flow, as music provides the opportunity to employ skills on a focused activity in proportion to one's talent. The goal is maximum participation in performance (2008: 26) and emphasis on "sameness" (18)—in music, in time, in group identification. The lens pairing "flow" and "participatory music" holds potential for viewing whether, how, and why ethnic groups in northern Thailand produce, contest, and participate in the music they do, and to what end. But since ethnicity is a self-referential, self-validating, and self-justifying "we-self" forged only in relation to an "other" (Thongchai1994: 12, 53; Barth 1969: 10), the presence of central Thai policies recur throughout this dissertation.

Thus, my objectives in this research include the following, with my emphasis and focus in reverse chronological order:

1. Analyze participatory music among representative ethnic groups in northern Thailand as it relates to, fits into, facilitates, competes with, and/or bypasses Thai national borders, identity, policy, history, and music.
2. Illustrate musical examples of appropriation of, engagement with and rejection of central Thai and otherwise exogenous cultural introductions. Here, Csikszentmihalyi and Turino's discussions of "flow" may complicate and illuminate localized forms of expression, where the critical and conscious self can be temporarily overlooked.
3. Examine participatory musical regionalism as it relates to strategies of positioning, trends of agency, and the employment of tools of globalization, transnational media, and contemporary innovation.
4. Apply, problematize, and expand Turino's use of "Flow" positive psychology to include not just unity and euphoria but also internal resistance, rejection, and the potential negative outcomes in the loss of the critical self within engaged participation.

These objectives will be explored with an inclusive lens that extends beyond "Lanna" as an

ethnic (northern Thai) category and instead examines various ethnic groups within a regional notion of "Greater Lanna" (a region reclaimed and re-presented as fitting within the borders of modern Thailand, though its historic reach was not bound in the same way), following the lead of Atkins and Bussakorn (2011: 245). As such, I plan on examining four case studies of musical engagement and presentation of "non-Thai" identities within the bounds of northern Thailand.

There is much at stake in identity politics in Thailand. The real or perceived divides between highland-lowland, majority-minority, rural-urban, colonial-subjugated, wealthy-poor, educated-uneducated, and so on and so forth are at times mapped onto ethnic labels, we-self communities, and political movements. The communities portrayed as rural, backward, and in need of modernization, assimilation, or assistance are at the same time paradoxically essentialized as nostalgically iconic of the authentic and timeless true Thailand. Those in control of the message want to spin it, but those on the ground as audience members are not without agency. These politics of representation extend to actual political representation, as seen in the continuing political events surrounding the Shinawatra family and the royalists.[2] Musical participation presents a worthy topic of investigation as it offers a window into how identities are shaped, complicated, presented, and contested.

Literature review

Historian Thongchai Winichakul takes a critical evaluation of Thai national discourse on official history, charting a progression from nationalist/monarchist (Prince Damrong) to Marxist to localist perspectives of scholars such as Sujit Wongthet (Thongchai 1995). His portrait is one of a gradual challenging of ethnic assumptions as the driving force of Thai historical narrative—from one nation and one ethnicity to local and multi-ethnic or multi-cultural allowances. The nation's mono-ethnic and monolithic past becomes increasingly complicated and contested as the

contemporary nation-state's mono-ethnic façade is challenged. He still concludes that local identity movements are a popular nostalgic cry for identity in a changing world and *not* a political or activist agenda, though this idea definitely needs revisiting in light of 21st century political struggles. Thongchai's *Siam Mapped* (1994) applies Benedict Anderson's ideas on nationalism to the physical manifestation of state notions of ethnic unity. While Thailand celebrates its distinctive status as the only Southeast Asian nation never colonized, Thongchai submits that Siam was a colonizer in its use of maps to encircle vast territories into its sovereign (and ethnic) boundaries. He notes,

> In the Bangkok Perspective, the annexation of former tributaries became 'the reform of provincial administration' over its outlying provinces; the expansion became the 'defense' of its territorial integrity; the resistance by some tributaries became 'internal' conflict, as opposed to the European 'outsider' threat; and the successful 'reform' became an emancipation of those tributaries from slavery and semi-vassalage to self government. (1996: 88)

It would seem that resistance can thus be read from the northern end of Thai history. Even as Thai nationalism appeals to the centralizing and unifying symbols of the monarchy, the flag, and state-sanctioned Buddhism, various minority enclaves also negotiate spaces within the national framework. As the history of Northern Thailand is reclaimed locally and its synchrony with these national histories are challenged, nationalism and the nation demand scrutiny.

Thongchai significantly frames Thainess, or Thai nationhood, as "We-self" (1994). Here, the collective is *a priori*, but only through the institutionalization of historical manipulation of legacy. Nationhood, and national identities, are encoded, taught, formulated, embedded, justified, sentimentalized, and operate largely unquestioned. The "We-self" is thus a situation much like David Foster Wallace's fish that are unaware of water: since the people operate within its rules and have internalized its assumptions, they are very much unaware of it. This, in a way, is very

similar to the "flow" concept as described by Turino and Csikszentmihalyi. The critical and reflexive self is reduced as long as one is fully engaged within the rules of the game. Thus, Thongchai's "We-self" acts as a grand scheme of social participation, and participation operates as a check on self-scrutiny. The collective works as long as there are participants, and it works on national terms if unseen contemporaries can be imagined. As I show in chapter two, this concept is readily seen in the *kham mueang* (northern dialect) term *Mu Hao*. Here, *Mu* literally means "group" or "collection" and *Hao* means "us". As with *Mu Ban* (village, or collection of houses), the term readily fuses in to Thongchai's idea of community, which can be extended as far out as needed to form a regional, ethnic, or national group.

Benedict Anderson insightfully brings to light the concept of the nation as an "imagined community" (2006: 18), whereby populations within the sphere of influence of a governing state are led to conceive of themselves as united and bound together through their "common experience" of history and destiny (122). To this end, state and corporate commodities help to forge these identities, including print capitalism in a vernacular script (61), museums, the census, maps (164), flags, and even or especially, as Thomas Turino and Philip Bohlman note, "unisonance," or national musical expression (Turino 2000:52; Bohlman 1989: 227-238). Thomas Hyland Eriksen echoes Anderson's sentiment, noting that "all ethnic groups have notions of a shared, common culture" (35). Anderson's work presents the means of creation.

Anderson's positions can be used to reconcile the arguments of two other leading scholars of nationalism. Eric Hobsbawm's "Invented Traditions" (1992) rightly draws attention to the constructedness of traditions and their moldable applicability, though he tends to discount real pasts upon which they are based, ignoring the power of culture and real or imagined links to heritage. Anthony Smith (1997; 2003) brings the conversation back to the emotional, cultural,

and sacred implications and power of the past, arguing that "golden ages" and "useable pasts" (1997) help explain the urgency and importance of grasping and shaping the discourse on heritage, ethnicity, and identity. That which is fought for has grounding in actual events and cultural constructs. The *reshaping* of these pasts is worthy of study (Thongchai 1995).

That histories are being reclaimed and repositioned in the north is indisputable. Chiang Mai's transition from a vassal state to being centrally managed by Bangkok is now openly being reframed as encroachment and colonization rather than benign "government reform" (Thongchai 1996: 88) of a unified Thai nation (Sarassawadee 2005). Patrick Jory (1999) asserts that this move has been afoot since the 1970s and 80s, when regional expression, long suppressed for the greater national cause of unity, has started to become acceptable (and even commercially enticing). On a field trip I took as a language student at Chiang Mai University in the summer of 2011 to the Chiang Mai Culture and Arts Museum at the Three Kings Monument, Ajaan Rien, a professor at CMU strongly expressed to all in earshot that the great modernizer King Chulalongkorn *Rama* V's railway was not an *innovation* but rather an *invasion*. Northern expression of distinctiveness from the central Bangkok Thai can be seen in the high regard for the musician-Princess Dararasmi, who was herself married to *Rama* V and is seen as the last royal ruler of the Lanna kingdom (Shahriari 2006), and also in the popularity of northern folk singer Jaran Manopetch, who Akins and Bussakorn credit with the 1970s revival of northern language, culture, music, and pride at a time when Bangkok's modernization policies had nearly eradicated traditional and regional expression (Akins and Bussakorn 252).

While Shahriari (2006) draws attention to the history of Princess Dararasmi and her reframing and reclaiming Lanna identity through music, Andrew McGraw (2007) examines the contemporary revival of what Gerald Dyck, 40 years prior, had called the "vanishing" *phin pia*

coconut stick zither (Dyck 1969). His work shows how regional pride has reinstated a nearly forgotten instrument, given it new meaning and application, and elevated its status to new heights. Some even claimed its indigenous, unique origin in *Lanna*, arguing that it should be *Thailand's* national instrument (118). This flew in the face of archeological evidence, which suggested an Indian origination, and skewed the national/regional debate (implying dominance over that nation rather than distinction from it), demonstrating that instruments and music have far-reaching implications in Thai ethnic politics. Returning to Thomas Hyland Eriksen, it is the expression of ethnic identity, in these cases a musical expression, that acts as a symbolic tool of political struggle (76). As he puts it, "History is not a product of the past but a response to the requirements of the present" (72).

Eriksen's writings provide valuable insight into ethnicity, an integral aspect of nationalism. Thongchai's book asserts that the map of Thailand came first, and an imagined ethnic amalgamation attempted to follow the map as its model (1994). Eriksen notes that the concept of nationalism implies that the ethnic and political boundaries match up, usually through primary markers of identity: language, religion, borders (98). These were championed in Thai discourse by modernizing Kings Chulalongkorn (*Rama* V) and especially Vajiravudh (*Rama* VI), whose mantra, "Nation, religion, King" (Rasmi 385) set the stage for Thailand's "official nationalism" (Wong 12), which envisioned a homogenous, hegemonic version of Thai identity bound to the constructed historical lineage of Sukothai-Ayutthaya-Bangkok and featured Indic god-kings and messages on modern citizenship couched in nationalist art forms (Vella 1974; see also Renard 1999). These versions of official history attempted to fold a Lanna kingdom and identity into the central Thai one, and Eriksen points to strategies of ethnic resistance through reification of cultural distinction including vernacularization (107), drawing on myths or history

reflexively (127-8), and self-defining the insiders and outside invaders (150). Overall, his work points to the emergent concept of ethnic identity and its reflexive use. In other words, "ethnicity" has not long been the "natural" or innate means of self-conception among humanity. Martin Stokes echoes that it was invented or recognized only in 1969 with Fredrik Barth's "categories of ascription" (4) and that it has arisen as a response to the failure of nationalism's whitewash in the modern era, which assumed that civic participation and consumption would trump heritage as a means of presenting and understanding the self (Eriksen 168). Anthony Smith's "Golden Ages" (1997: 39), by which a nation or collective seeks to convince an ethnic people of their greatness, is a powerful model, and is continually copied by disenfranchised factions within the nation seeking to reclaim or reimagine their own great pasts and recognition of distinctiveness or right to self-govern—see, for example, Karen evangelist Loo Shwe's 1962 claim that the Karen founded the kingdom of Chiang Mai, predating Thai presence by nearly a millennium (2006: 2).

On this topic, I should be clear that this research begins not with the ethnic definition of Lanna, which would limit my research to the Thai-Yuan or Lanna-Thai people of northern Thailand (Wong 2000). Neither does it follow the historic geographic space that was the Lanna kingdom, which would extend "Lanna" beyond the borders of the nation of Thailand. If the frontiers of the traditional Southeast Asian *mueang* were amorphous (Holt 2009), the varied cultural boundaries of ethnic groups in northern Thailand have also long been fluid and flexible (Eriksen 11; Keyes 1995). For this reason, while acknowledging that the highland groups of northern Thailand each have their own distinct culture, language, customs, spiritual practices, and place within Thai national history, I am including them in this study, marking the bounds of my research by region and nation rather than by ethnicity (though still capped by national borders and in response to central policies). The conception of "Lanna" referring to the region

rather than the ethnic label ("Lanna Thai") or the historical kingdom is in keeping with the views of Akins and Bussakorn, who argue that "Lanna" is now used as a name of geography and culture of Thailand's north in relation to Bangkok (244; see also McGraw 2007). Dararasmi herself coined the term "Lanna-Thai" in the 1930s as a means of encompassing the scope of northern ethnic diversity (Shahriari 2001), but it still remains bound up in national borders.

Yet even as scholars point to this northern ethnic inclusiveness, they tend to privilege northern Thai, or *khon mueang*, musical expression. Seemingly every work on Northern Thailand as a region acknowledges the existence and importance of highland groups, especially if tourism is addressed in any fashion (Shahriari 2001: 83; Johnson 2014: 103-107). Yet the typical trend is to recognize them briefly and then write them out of the scope of the study (see, for example, Forbes and Henly 1997). The music of the highland peoples has not received enough attention in northern Thailand studies, even though it is clearly shown that these groups were greatly affected by lowland central administrative reforms (Renard 1980; Scott 2009; Pinkaew 2003). Renard foregrounds the changing relations between the Karen and Siamese governance, where cordial relations with Chiang Mai rulers were severed, resulting in a retreat of highlanders into the hills, where they remained relatively isolated until the 1950s saw the beginning stages of assimilation programs (Hayami 2004; Pinkaew 2003; Young 1963). Various artists are now finding new means of engagement, reinserting their voices back into national discourse, perhaps emboldened by moves to accept and give voice to regional dissent and expression (Jory 1999). Karen activist Chi Suwichan's auto-biographical ethnography (2011) provides a clear example, and other scholars are beginning to take note of highland activism and engagement, including reinterpretations of pasts and repositioning of pasts within acceptable venues in Thai media, governance, and education (Odochao 2006; McKinnon 2003).

While the above authors provide excellent foundations for investigating the role of nationalism and ethnic identity and the musical conception, contestation, and (re)construction of both, they could use some more nuanced attention. The pairing of the music itself to these trends of resistance and repositioning is not fully fleshed out, though McGraw and Shahriari provide excellent foundations and arguments for this kind of work. This dissertation seeks to specifically address the features, applications, and issues at work in the application of Turino's (2008) "participatory music" model of analysis—including the lyrics, instruments, sounds, pedagogies, performances—ethnographically. Of specific interest is the audience (reception, participation, and discussions), an arena that has not been investigated fully enough yet. While Lanna actors praise Jaran Manopetch for singing in northern dialect, claiming *that* this promotes northern pride and identity, I look at the *how* of participatory identity formation, not only in the immediate space of performance but also as a site for imagining a greater Lanna. While Chi Suwichan Phattanaphraiwan's voice is strong in his own writings and critiques of Thai forestry officials and government policies, I investigate the cosmopolitanism of his message and seek out the reasons why his music and message is now accepted and promoted to the degree it is in Thai media even as some members of his own ethnic group are withholding participation. When Akha activist-musician Aju Jupoh denounces lowland forces through participatory genres that draw upon lowland genres, I propose the unscrutinized Trojan horse that is participation and the "flow state" and its power to provide inroads for Thai and other non-traditional values. Finally, where appropriate and relevant, my ethnographic research at times brings me into various presentational spaces, where I touch upon the role of museums as sites for contesting as well as confirming various narratives through seemingly benign and tourist-oriented regional museums. The holder of the reigns of history here matters, marking the difference (as well as the imagined

distance) between “innovation” and “invasion.”

Ethnographic & Historical background

The walled city of Chiang Mai was founded on April 12, 1296 C.E. by *Phaya* (king) Mangrai (พญามังราย) of Yonok, who conquered an existing settlement of *Lawa* people of Wiang Haripunchai (under the protection of Lamphun) originally established by the hermit monk Wasuthep in 768 C.E.[3] Thongchai Winichakul, James Scott, and others (Gillogy & Adams 2011; Tarling 1992; Holt 2009) describe Southeast Asian kingdoms in this period alternatively raiding nearby polities for manpower and making treaties through marriage alliances. Constructed with the input of two nearby kings, Ngam Muang of Payao and Ruang (or Ramkhamhaeng) of Sukothai, the Lanna kingdom brought together a wide variety of peoples (Lawa, Thai Lua, Mon, Shan, Lao) under one ruling power and one emerging Tai Yuan (northern Thai) common identity (Wyatt 43-46). Mangrai died in 1317, but the kingdom continued to prosper, with Chiang Mai as the capital. While Chiang Mai, the capital of the Lanna kingdom, made significant gains and prospered well into the 16th century, it was eventually conquered by King Bayinnaung from neighboring Burma in 1558 and remained under Burmese rule until 1774 (Wyatt 116-118), when an alliance with the Thai king Taksin (1734-1782) marked the ending of the Burmese occupation of Siam (Wyatt 149).

After liberation from Burmese rule, Lanna was folded into central Thai *Cakri* dynastic oversight, serving as check on Burmese raids to Vientiane and other northern strongholds. Chiang Mai, depleted of citizens due to the war, was abandoned for 20 years (1776-1796) and rebuilt by King Kawila (r.1774-1782) (Wyatt 179). As semi-autonomous polities, Lanna and other northern kingdoms paid tribute to Bangkok’s *Rama* kings. However, as the western colonial powers began their encroachment (Britain in Burma and France in Cambodia), King

Chulalongkorn *Rama V* (1853-1910) launched a series modernizing reforms, resulting in the formalization of borders, consolidation of central rule, and reduced power and influence of regional nobility. Chiang Mai kings were replaced by Bangkok-appointed ministers. Chiang Mai was formally annexed to Siam in 1896, a union symbolically sealed in 1886 by the marriage of King Chulalongkorn and Lanna princess Dararasmi (1873-1933), daughter of Chiang Mai's King Inthanon.

Princess Dararasmi plays an important part in the arts of Chiang Mai. After living in the palace in Bangkok from 1886-1914, she returned to Chiang Mai following Chulalongkorn's death. She had been exposed to and trained in Bangkok's court traditions and is credited with creating and popularizing the *fawn* regional folk dance as well as modernizing and popularizing Lanna music (Renard 1999). A patron of the arts, "Her close relationship with King Chulalongkorn helped Dararasmi encourage the maintenance and development of regional identity in northern Thailand after its annexation to Siam" (Shahriari 5; also see Woodhouse 180-187). She studied music and dance formally in Bangkok, and brought this academic rigor back to Lanna. Princess Dararasmi also moved Northern Thai music from informal to institutional training methods and brought court music out of the palace for public consumption (Woodhouse 237). At King Prajadhipok's (Rama VII) visit to Chiang Mai in 1927, the princess arranged for royal music to be featured alongside northern folk traditions (such as *joi saw*, an improvised rhythmic vocal performance in the *kham mueang* dialect accompanied by the *pi jum*, a brass free-reed attached to a bamboo shaft) [CD track 04], which "had the underlying political objective of legitimizing the time-honored traditions still vital to the daily lives of the northern population" (Shahriari 8). This characterization by Shahriari puts regional folk music at the heart of arguing for recognition and equal treatment by centralized ruling powers. The princess modified her local

dance traditions to appeal to Bangkok's royal establishment while maintaining ties to regional identity.

All of this backstory helps to set some important parameters in viewing contemporary music and identity in the north. In an age of reflexive retrospection, regionalists are looking to "golden ages" of the past to locate and "re-root" ethnic communities (Smith 1997: 49). These trends can be seen in various aspects of northern responses to foreign encroachment. Lanna has always been viewed as somewhat of a rebel by Bangkok (Johnson 2011), as demonstrated in Yoko Hayami's (2004) discussion of rogue monk Kruba Sriwichai's rejection of central monastic influence of the *Thammacarik* proselytizing mission (see also Sarasawadee 2005: 213). While Thailand's post-WWII activities can be described as one of government-driven assimilationist and nationalist policies (including centralized language, music, religion, and dress), economic, commercial, and political liberalization from the 1990s have paved the way for a government- sanctioned multicultural regional expression (Jory 1999). A precursor and watershed event here was the northern renaissance of the 1970s.

A primary actor in the conspicuous revival of northern identity is northern Thai musician Jaran Manopetch, who released his first cassette album in 1978. Atkins and Bussakorn credit him with the creation of a new popular genre, *"Folk Song Kham Mueang,"* a genre influenced by 1960s American folk movement (Ferguson 2010). This music uses the northern *kham mueang* dialect purposefully and unapologetically as an identity marker, and blends newly composed songs, traditional Lanna music, and western melodies (Akins and Bussakorn 252). This musical reclamation of local dialect spawned many offshoot genres and performers, including among highland communities inspired by this and other modern Thai genres *luk thung* (country music) and *phleng phua chiwit* (hard rock "songs for life") used for protest as well as commercial ends

(Ubonrat 1990; Mitchel 2011; Tausig 2014; also see chapter five). Regional Lanna styles have now become rather ubiquitous in Chiang Mai again, as evidenced by the annual *Suepsan Lanna* (Pass on Lanna) festival, started in 1997, that features traditional regional Lanna music on stage. The presence of various schools, temple classes, university study groups, and internships catering to tourists also point to newer applications in this revival (Akins and Bussakorn 249-51). Whether celebrated as authentic or critiqued as opportunist, Lanna-Thai music has a significant presence and message. And any identity is constructed with through border-making, marking out the "we-self" from the "other" (Thongchai 1994: 16).

The upland ethnic communities of the north have their own, troubled history with Bangkok's centralization policies that in some ways parallel the Lanna experience of the 19th and 20th centuries. Roland Renard's PhD dissertation (1980) covers the history of the Karen people of Thailand through 1923, and details a history of close relations between Karen people of the north and Lanna authorities, one that was severed in Bangkok's takeover, resulting in an unofficial policy of "benign neglect" (219). Highlanders subsequently had minimal contact with the central Thai state until concerns over communism, forestry management, drug trafficking, and "civilizing" national citizenship policies drew lowland authorities' attention to the hills, where they began a movement to regulate, settle, educate, civilize, and govern the people of the mountains (Pinkaew 29-31). Many of the stereotypes formed in the 1960s still persist in Thai media, tourist operations, and in social memory: the "hill tribes" (actually six distinct groups, each with unique cultures, languages, dress, agricultural practices, spiritual practices, and livelihoods) were lumped together in the Thai discourse as swiddening forest destroyers, communist harborers, impoverished charity cases, poor Thai speakers, lacking in hygiene and education, and otherwise generally "other" than Thai. Contestation of these lingering narratives

takes many forms, one of which is the musical activism of Karen artist "Chi" Suwichan Phattanaphraiwan (2011) and Akha activist Aju Jupoh, whose iconic, NGO-conceived and sponsored folk-rock album would achieve transnational anthem-like status among the Akha. At the same time, other highland groups (such as the Lahu case presented in chapter four) carry on with participatory music that is not in any international spotlight and not couched in politicized international, indigenous, or outwardly-focused rhetoric. Yet amongst the diversity of expression and means of engagement, the lowland Thai nation looms strong in the background as an important point of connection between the various threads.

The participatory uses of northern music in identity politics can easily be understood as constructivist and reactionary in nature, and the ambivalent history with central Thai authorities informs such regional tensions and responses. The modern national assimilationist policies can be generalized as follows: 1) 1890s: King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) began a centralization process of government usurping local rule. 2) Early 1900s: King Vajiravudh (Rama VI) makes Buddhism and national language of primary national importance. 3) 1939: the nation's name officially changes from "Siam" (ethnically neutral) to "Thailand" (implying that people who are ethnically Thai are true nationals) after the overthrow of the absolute monarchy. A brief type of "cultural revolution" ensued, where P.M. Phibulsongkhram enacted laws banning cultural practices deemed backward, uncivilized, or not up to standard (Moro 2004). 4) 1960-80s: communist threat justifies suspicions of ethnic minorities and outsiders such as the Lao, Chinese, Malay, and highlanders (Jory 338) even as a northern renaissance begins to pave the way for localism. The next era of multicultural (glossed as "regional") expression has already begun, and music provides a prime area for investigating how these identities are constructed, presented, situated, marketed, politicized, globalized, localized, appropriated, recontexualized, and

perceived via participatory engagement.

Methodology

Johan Lindquist (2009) employs a "multi-local" ethnographic approach to researching mobility— referring to his as a "train station" approach (10)— where he stays put on Batam island as various migrants arrive and depart. He argues that a stationary view of mobility and migration offers a valid perspective on movement. Secondly, this approach to ethnography focuses on various ethnic groups of Indonesia as they encounter larger globalized forces through common tropes of a promised upward mobilities (which rarely if ever come to fruition for his informants). His method involves "an attempt to write an ethnography of globalization...in terms of relationships that bind individuals together over large distances" (8-9). Thus, his informants are bound up in larger systems more complicated than push and pull factors and more fluid than strict ethnic or national borders.

Anna Tsing's *Friction* (2005) takes a similar, but flipped, approach. For her, the environmental issues affecting Indonesia align with multivocal transnational issues and philosophies. As such, her ethnographic endeavor ranges from library research on John Muir and the American romanticized national park, engagement with cosmopolitan university eco clubs, car-ride conversations with unchecked developers in frontier zones, and intimate accounts of indigenous populations making use of transnational and modern conceptions of space and place. My ethnographic engagement with varied communities and institutions in the region echo many of her approaches—i.e., I engage with multiple agents interacting with one larger entity.

This study of music in northern Thailand blends both Lindquist's and Tsing's ideas. My admittedly more ephemeral "train station", the entity through which those I interacted with all pass through and engage with on varying levels, is the nation-state of Thailand and its

manifestations in the north. As in Lindquist's case, the group represents a diverse ethnic pool (Akha, Lanna Thai, Karen, Lahu), but this multi-sited ethnography focuses on the locations of state engagement rather than offering a comprehensive explanation of village-level ethnic systems of each group. And from Tsing's model I borrow draw from the idea that global imagery and ideals become newly relevant to a diverse group of small, non-state ethnic entities seeking autonomy, authenticity, or autochthony.[4] Thus, all four groups in this multi-sited ethnography grapple with the center, and they do so with varied applications of participatory music.

These individual tales of musical engagement serve as figures affected by larger forces. Therefore, the ethnographic approach—multi-sited and focused on key "Figures of Southeast Asian Modernity" (Barker, Harms, and Lindquist 2014) as they interact with real or imagined audiences and groups—echo similar approaches of Tim Rice (2014) or Mary Rees (2009), who see the individual as a site of ethnographic engagement, representative of larger trends and powers at work. Individual voices thus permeate my study, and a chapter will be devoted to each representative and their musical engagements.

The field research aspect of data collection draws upon years of intentional relationship building through my experience in Thailand as a Peace Corps volunteer (2007-9); as a language student at Chiang Mai university in the summer of 2011; as host to visiting musicians for the East-West Center exhibition of Thailand's highland ethnic groups, "Songs of Memory" in 2012; through pre-dissertation ethnographic research conducted in Chiang Mai in the summer of 2013; as a student at Payap University in 2015; and observances of the Lahu New Year in 2008, 2009, and 2016. The nature of these relationships allowed for targeted research with already-familiar community members. A central aspect of my research relies on qualitative data gathered in dialogic interviews with key community members such as, but not limited to, the following:

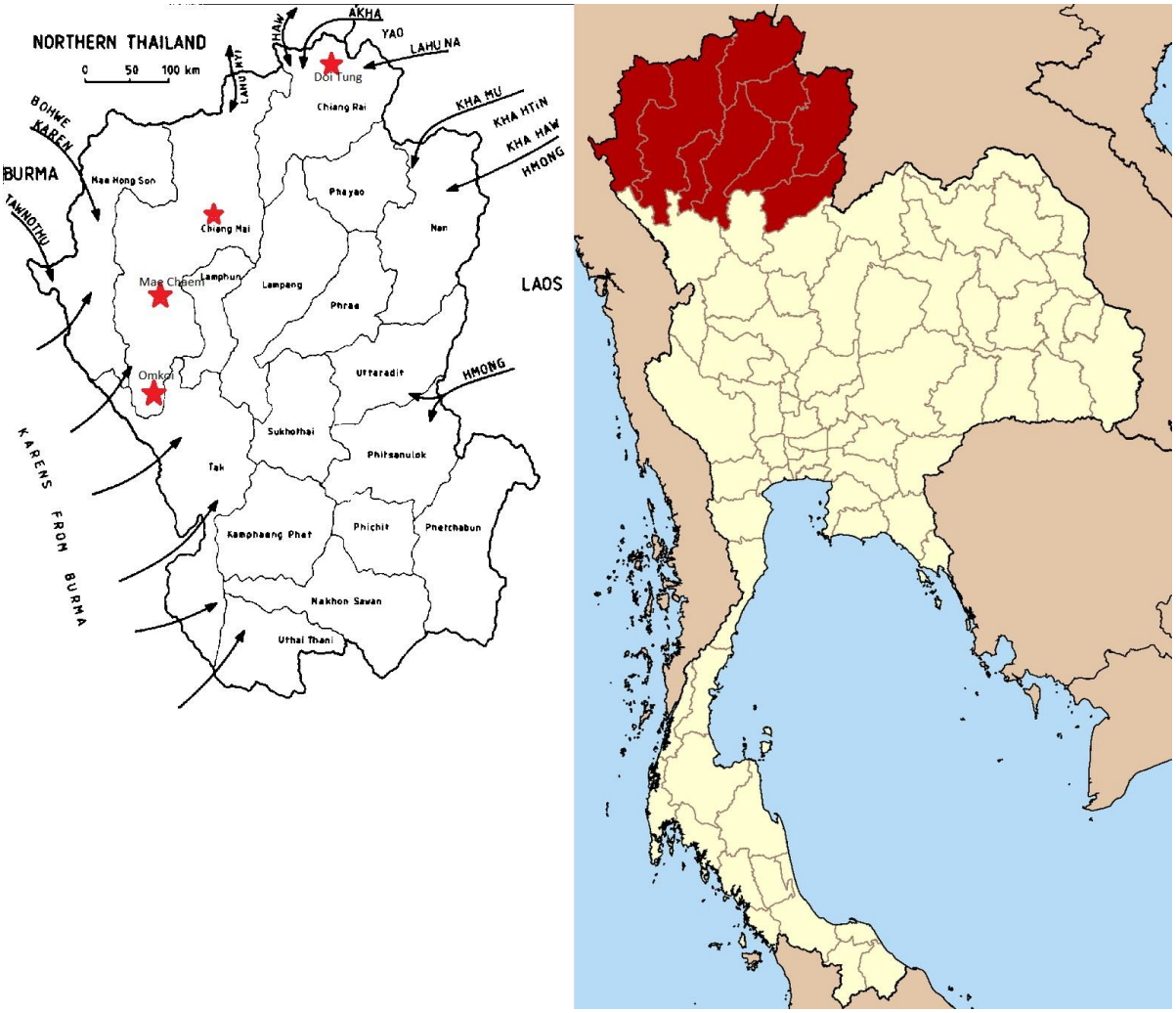

Figure 1: Maps of Northern Thailand: My four main sites marked with stars from top to bottom (Akha-Chiang Rai, Lanna and Karen-Chiang Mai, Karen-Mae Chaem, Lahu and Karen-Omkoi). Sourced from Gordon Young (1974) and Wikipedia Commons.[5]

Ethnographic Sources

1. Northern Thai scholars and performers of *Lanna* music (*salaw saw sueng* as well as *folksawng khammueang*)[6], including "*Khru* Aed" (Panutat Apichanatong) and *Khru* "Tom" (Sareeyoth Na Savipornwusahim, northern ensemble teacher and promoter). These interviews occurred during a broader musical discipleship, whereby I engaged in a traditional learning process, dealing with music in student-teacher relationships and

emphasizing bi-musicality, music as social process (Turino 2008; Rice 2014), and pedagogy.

2. Music of highland ethnic groups was examined through on-site interviews with already-known community members:

    a. Akha music offers transnational themes to explore. Mr. Aju Jupoh is a musician, NGO advisor, and serves as advisor for Akha ancestral wisdom documentation projects including the website www.akhaworld.com, which seeks to unite Akha dispersed throughout the golden triangle (regardless of national affiliation). Aju also served on the committee of Akha that agreed upon a universal, Romanized Akha script that is now used among transnational communities spanning China, Thailand, Laos, and Burma. Catherine Falk's work (2004) addresses similar themes of transnational or post-national "autoethnography" in diaspora in the case of the Hmong's free-reed aerophone *Qeej*. I first met him at the East-West Center "Songs of Memory" exhibit of 2012 and had visited with him multiple times in person in Chiang Rai (2013, 2015), maintaining online communication as well.

    b. Karen music has received increasing attention in Thai media thanks largely to professor, author, and musician "Chi" Suwichan Phattanaphraiwan, whom I first met through the Center for Ethnic Studies and Development while studying at Chiang Mai University in 2011. He is one of the primary spokesmen for the Karen in Thailand, and has represented them at the United Nations and through international concerts. His methods of appropriation offer perspectives on new trends in indigenous activism. He also recently published a text in Thai on the Karen harp, *Rao Khue Tenaku* [I am Tenaku], which I have translated (2015).

Chi's academic work, including his second book, *Forbidden Songs* (2014), presents the Karen as the indigenous people of the north (aligned with the Lawa) and thus argues his case for human rights, through music, from this perspective and with UNESCO conventions in mind.

c. The Lahu are known for their New Year festival, which attracts attention from (mostly Thai) tourists and government officials eager to promote them in the sub-district where I served as a Peace Corps volunteer. As such, I relied on community contacts through Mr. Jaw Thaw, a former council member, former vice-mayor, and continuing village representative whom I have known since 2007. He is very aware of the iconic status of the Lahu New Year dance as it represents Lahu-ness to Thais and his own community. As such, it has advantages locally and nationally, but it also has the capacity to engender essentialist notions and stereotypes. There is thus much at stake in its presentation.

3. Museums also offered rich data on the presentation of culture, place, and history. This research includes various site visits to relevant "authoritative" locations for archival research and participant observation, including

    a. Chiang Mai Cultural Center (Tourist venue for presenting music, dance, and food of Lanna). This site also houses the Lanna Folk Museum.
    b. Ban Tong Luang Ecomuseum (Maesa, Chiang Mai), site of a locally owned and operated "hilltribe" village display.
    c. Princess Daraphirom Palace Museum, featuring history on Princess Dara, wife of Chulalongkorn and promoter of Northern Thai music and culture (Mae Rim).
    d. Chiang Mai National Museum (Lanna heritage as it pertains to the Thai nation)

e. Chiang Mai Folk Museum (specifically emphasizes Chiang Mai's independent glory, beyond Bangkok's rule).

4. Archival Research included a summer (2015) spent at the Payap University archives, which houses original manuscripts and diaries of the first missionaries in the north. After being forced out of China in the 1950s, many American missionaries concentrated their efforts on the highland ethnic groups of northern Thailand, pre-dating scholarly investigations (usually anthropological) by about a decade. These missionaries were some of the first outsiders to interact with the groups in question, and their particularly close relationship with the Karen inform much of chapter three.

Musical Transcription

All of the above-mentioned activities include music. Lyrics, scales, instrument materials, transmission systems, and change offer analyzable material. As with any ethnomusicological study, the rendering of sound as text here involves transcription, with all of its benefits, challenges, and problems (Seeger 1958; Hood 1971). For northern Thai music, indigenous and western notation are employed as needed and as makes sense to non-Thai audiences (Morton 1976).[7] For oral cultures (Akha, Karen, Lahu), western transcription methods have been modified as needed to represent sound on paper. In most cases, when I reference songs and their structure, I provide snippets of the transcription in text with the entire transcription placed as an appendix to each chapter, and the accompanying CD includes all songs transcribed and referenced. Unless otherwise noted, all transcriptions presented in this document are my own.

Significance

This research borrows from and contributes to various academic fields. It demonstrates the politicization and reconstruction of regional history and ethnic identity, charts the shifting

perceptions of Thai nationalism and national history, highlights the importance of an ethnographic and ethnomusicological approach to regional expression and ethnic identity politcs in Thailand, and addresses long-understudied topics of musical engagements of Thailand's highland ethnic groups with lowland ideology. Research on the music of these ethnic groups has been minimal, and the few studies that can be found were typically conducted in isolated cases and insular contexts rather than as being connected to 21st century agency and modern political engagement with lowland messaging (Larson 1984; Schworer-Kohl 1990; Walker 1983). Existing studies of northern highland musical expression were mostly undertaken in a pre-globalized information era (Marshall 1922; Becker 1964; Stern 1971) or in the wake of the establishment of the "Tribal Research Center" in Chiang Mai in 1965 and thus deserve a fresh investigation and analysis. I should note here that social, political, and anthropological studies of highland groups *have* stressed these inter-group relations (i.e. Hayami 2004), but when it comes to *musical* studies, they have trended toward essentialism, being more insular and confined to the groups or villages (Larsen 1984).

My study specifically looks at musical acts of engagement with authority in the north. Working from a framework of nationalism and ethnic identity requires that an "other" find its way into the narrative. I interact with musicians as participant-observer and do not claim to be spokesperson or legitimate member of any group represented here; neither do I ignore that my presence and participation alters the situation and even the performance. My teachers and interviewees at times used this to their advantage.[8] This examination of music is, therefore, a multi-party conversation—even if performers claim an inward focus, the self is still understood in relation to the other (Thongchai 1994; Eriksen 2011). Northern Thai musical participation and presentation in this research will be analyzed with attention to their role in forming, shaping, and

projecting regional identity, whether for purposes of group cohesion, increased autonomy, or rejection of the center. The ethnographic work here shows vibrant and reflexive musical traditions, positionally reimagined both by performers and audience members in a multicultural landscape and following constructivist trends of mining the past for contemporary use.

The contribution to ethnomusicology herein comes in applying, expanding, and adding nuance to Turino's "participatory music". His deft combination of semiotics, "flow" positive psychology, and mobilized musical acts offers fresh insights into the ways that communities are formed. This dissertation presents extensions of and questions for his model. Chapter two applies a participatory lens to Lanna traditional *salaw-saw-sueng* music, tying Turino's work to both Benedict Anderson's imaginable collective and Charles Seeger's *normenon* to demonstrate that "participation" need not remain local and present-tense but can extend, by means of imagination, to the furthest reaches of the map and across time. Where *salaw-saw-sueng* music demonstrates "social synchrony," chapter three takes on a case of Karen neo-traditionalism and musician Chi Suwichan Phattanphraiwan's quest to revive and remake Karen music and history. His difficulties with his own ethnic community demonstrate that social synchrony and participatory music also have their obverse: social distancing, "tuning out," and a refusal to participate due to taste, preference, ideas about authenticity, and religious conservativism. Here, Keil and Feld's celebrated "Groove" (2005) may be hegemonic, homogenizing, and exclusionary rather than compelling and inviting. Chapter four moves away from the internationally-known activist to the more classic (for the field of ethnomusicology) isolated rural village, where I examine Lahu New Year dance music in light of Csikszentmihalyi's ideas of "enjoyment" as they apply to musical participation and identity formation. Here, the notion of "fun" as noted in various studies of Thai culture (Jonsson 2001) proves relevant, compelling, and absolutely essential in underpinning

group identity and drive. The final ethnographic investigation centers on well-known Akha activist and musician Aju Jupoh, whose use of media transcends national borders even as the nature of participatory music enables the state to maintain presence. In chapter six I recap and show the connections at work: whether autochthonous (Lanna), indigenous (Karen), or ethnic minority (Lahu and Akha), the "lowland" or central Thai powers affirm, strengthen, and connect the various groups. The state may be bypassed, it might be overthrown, but it cannot be ignored.

Broadly, this study is guided by two aims. First is to draw attention to the music that has to this point been largely neglected in the literature, not for the purposes of mere documentation but as a means of showing how these groups use music to find a voice, build community, interact with their socio-eco-political situations, and share the story of their "we-self", or *mu-hao*, with, for, and about the state. As I recognize that this alone is a bit insular, my second aim is to use this music to highlight the capabilities, challenges, pitfalls, and potentials of Turino's theoretical framing and pairing of positive psychology with participatory music. As presented in *Music as Social Life* (2008), it is a powerful model of positive engagement, but it is in need of nuance that makes room for negative identification as well as the dangers of the disappearing critical self while engaged in the flow state.

Neitz and Spickard (1990) criticized studies of religion in Southeast Asia for being too caught up in the symbols and their meanings in religion (16), claiming that scholars largely ignore religious *experience* and fortifying our understanding of religion by adding ideas from Csikszentmihalyi (flow) and Alfred Schutz (sociality, tuning in) to make sense of religious fervor (the experience of religion rather than just a semiotic deconstruction of the icons). The same could be applied to Anthony Smith's work: ethnic nationalism *is* like religion, but just as Nietz points out, it is more than symbolic items, sacred documents, or religious paraphernalia. The

experience of the collective, the pentecostal or charismatic aspects (of ethnicity, nationalism, or other we-selves), are also important.

Thongchai's "we-self" label is made of two parts: the multitude of particulars and the overarching general that they must be glossed, reduced, or amalgamated into. For Thongchai, mapping is the technology that necessarily distorts complexity and merges it into an easily identifiable object. But as with Nietz's framing, this idea favors the icons, the paraphernalia of the nation. Thongchai's we-self is fused to the icons of the state, analyzed for meaning, when the felt experience, the participation, is happening in these circles of musical engagement on the ground. Flow helps to explain *how* these multitudes (the "we") are merged into one (the "self"). In such a process, the particulars need to be glossed over, forgotten, simplified into the whole, and Csikszentmihalyi's flow state points to this exact phenomenon at play: the critical self loses prominence as engaged participation (in the whole) increases. This is how the complex and unique individual is absorbed into the national map, the greater collective, the we-self. As this feelingful participation is evident in the musical traditions of these various groups in northern Thailand, they make excellent case studies for exploring this theory. I begin exploring this process with a look at Lanna music in Chiang Mai.

CHAPTER 2. Lanna Heritage and the Musical Construction of the *Mu-Hao* (We-Self): Imagining Northern Thailand through Participatory Music.

Introduction

Scholars deal with ethnicity as an *ascriptive* and relatively recent human construct, gaining increased attention starting in the early 1970s (Barth 1969; Glazer and Moynihan, 1974; Eriksen 2010: 1) and emerging as a process made possible by means of narrative media (Anderson 2006: 204) that allows for a construction of a timeless vision of heritages and pasts with a clear "other" distinguished from the self (Hall 1996a: 613-15; Lowenthal 13). Thongchai's *Siam Mapped* fuses ethnicity and nationalism together through maps as a bordering technology, while groups themselves self-identify ethnic "we-selves" and "others" (1994). The 1970s renaissance of *Lanna* identity in northern Thailand—encompassing both secular, modern, and consumable as well as sacred and spiritual notions of the northern we-self (Johnson 2014: 95, 101)— joins together a discourse of heritage and ethnicity centered on historic claims to great kingdoms and ethnic distinctiveness. But this we-self only emerges through negative or obverse comparison to the "other" side of the relationally-formed ethnic self: Bangkok and the nation of Thailand.

This chapter provides an ethnomusicological analysis of a wide-spread genre of Lanna music called *Folk Song Khammueang* (Akins and Bussakorn 2011; Ferguson 2010), which in this case is performed by the northern *salaw-saw-sueng* ensemble. By employing Thomas Turino's "participatory music" (2008) and revisiting Charles Seeger's "normenon" in "music space-time" (1951), I show how musical performance works within ethnic and national conceptualizations in order to allow actors to reimagine and make manifest feelings of inclusion, unity, and pride in a reframed heritage. "Normenon" here is a word coined by Seeger to be

distinguished from "phenomenon," i.e., not a one time occurance but rather a repeated or ongoing "omnicurrance", as it were. Where others (Jory 1999; Thongchai 1995: 118) framed Thailand's regionalist outcomes in mostly economic terms while minimizing political or activist outcomes, I show that regional musical expression firmly engages with heritage and historical discourse and an imagining of a northern "we-self" community through shared participatory music. This process enables a multivalent northern identity in the minds of the listeners and participants, which has important implications for the self, region, and state.

This study shows how music works as a text, much like Benedict Anderson's print-capitalism (2006), in binding and bounding imaginable communities of participants who, having never met each other, are able to conceive of themselves as "*Mu hao*," a we-self united both by a common performative participation as well as a common experience of exclusion from the central state. In this chapter, I examine two iconic northern songs as case studies (*Long Mae Ping* and *Mu Hao Chao Nuea*) in light of the history of the Lanna kingdom of northern Thailand, with particular attention to the victimization of the local feminine as metaphor for state intrusion. This takes place within the ethnographic context of my experience as participant-observer-performer with an amateur Lanna *Salaw-Saw-Sueng* community music group in Suan Dawk, a community in Chiang Mai.

Karaoke: The National and Regional in Song

In July of 2011, I was wrapping up an intensive language study at Chiang Mai University.[9] After cramming a year's worth of language study into six weeks, the official rankings and exams had ended and the "real" evaluation was set to take place: karaoke night. Whatever mastery of language had been proven or not by engaging with articles, site visits, and conversations that had been the norm until now, nothing demonstrated language and cultural

acquisition quite like the challenge of singing Thai in front of the faculty and staff in the top floor conference room of the Humanities Building at CMU. Afternoons leading up to this event had been spent silently rehearsing with the aid of *youtube* videos perpetually on repeat, with the karaoke Thai subtitles shifting from red to blue font as it moved through the timelines.

We entered the conference room and circumambulated the refreshments table. Drinks included hot tea and *Nestlé* "3-in-1", a powdery mixture combination of malt, milk, and cocoa. Dry goods featured single-serve packages of the unfortunately-translated and labelled *Butt-o* and *Collon* crackers. My song was "*Kuan Jai Phi Luang*" (Literally, "My Beloved Luang"),[10] a carry-over from my days as a Peace Corps volunteer in Monjong, a sub-district of Omkoi in the southwestern corner of Chiang Mai province. It was an evening village staple, a song frequently overheard as young male migrant workers on home leave zoomed past on their mopeds—decked out in boxer shorts, tattoos, and shabby hair with cigarettes clinched between their teeth— while singing at the top of their lungs above an overtaxed moped's roar. The increased volume culminated with a raspy scream at the end of the phrase, loudness and highness peaking together:

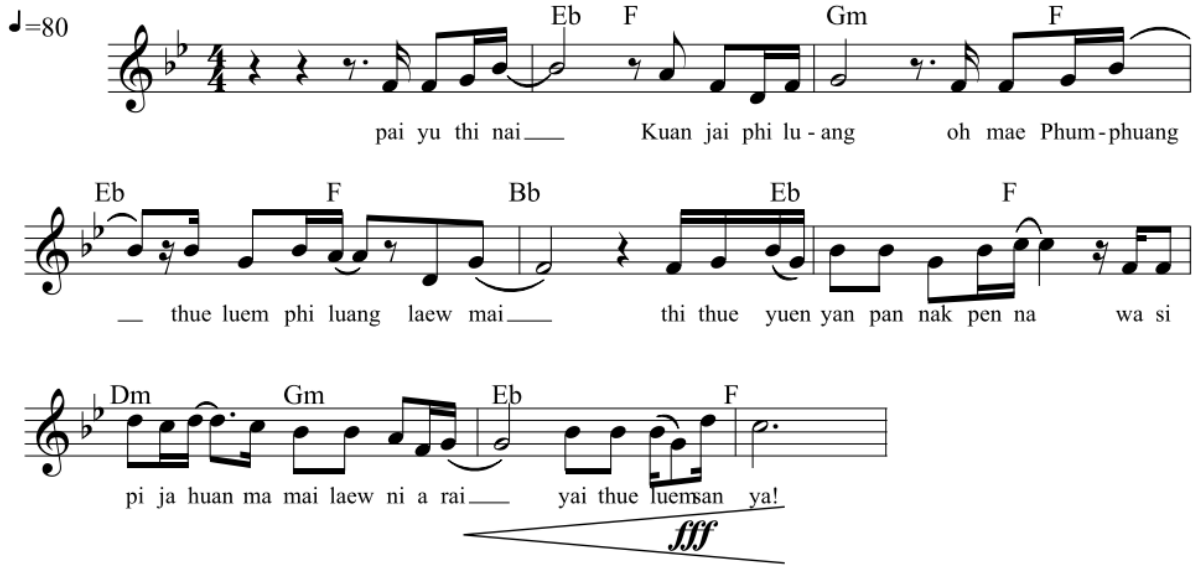

Figure 2: Ending of Chorus of *Khuan Jai Phi Luang* by Kai Luang (R Siam). [11]

The song's lyrical content was typical of *Luk Thung* Thai country music, featuring a storyline of a poor rural migrant worker who goes off to Bangkok and promises to return, but, for various reasons and complications, either cannot or does not. As such, it speaks to long-observed promises and disappointments with the let-downs of modernity (Lindquist 2009) as well as the deeper links to authenticity found within or projected onto peasant culture and glorified, nostalgic, and rural "rusticity" (Amporn 30-31). This rural-urban divide will map onto central-regional frictions later in this chapter, but in order to understand rural resistance to central and/or urban hegemonies, a center-out view deserves some scrutiny. The next karaoke performance clearly presented this majority perspective.

Ron, a fellow language learner, used his lessons to hone his political vocabulary in order to bring up the uneasy political tensions with any new Thai acquaintance, from taxi drivers to gold brokers. The summer of our program coincided with the heated election of Yingluck Shinawatra, sister of the popular former Prime Minister Thaksin who was ousted in a bloodless coup d'état in 2006 and whose presence and reputation are still felt amidst his absence. Since 2006, a series of elections, overthrows, new elections, and general unease and unrest have plagued Thai politics, fueled by political impasses on both the "red shirt" side (in support of Thaksin, who himself hails from Thailand's northern province of Chiang Mai) and the opposing "yellow shirts," who famously shut down Bangkok's Suvarnaphumi International Airport in 2008, effectively halting Thailand's tourist industry and economy for weeks.[12]

Ron's karaoke song, Petch Osathanugrah's *"Rao Pen Khon Thai"* (Literally, "We are Thai") presented a nationalist/royalist appeal for unity and harmony. I present the intro and first verse here as an introduction to the format and structure (a lyrical analysis will follow).

Basically, the style is a western pop sound with a syncopated swing rhythm, while the lyrics champion national unity and reconciliation—from a central perspective.

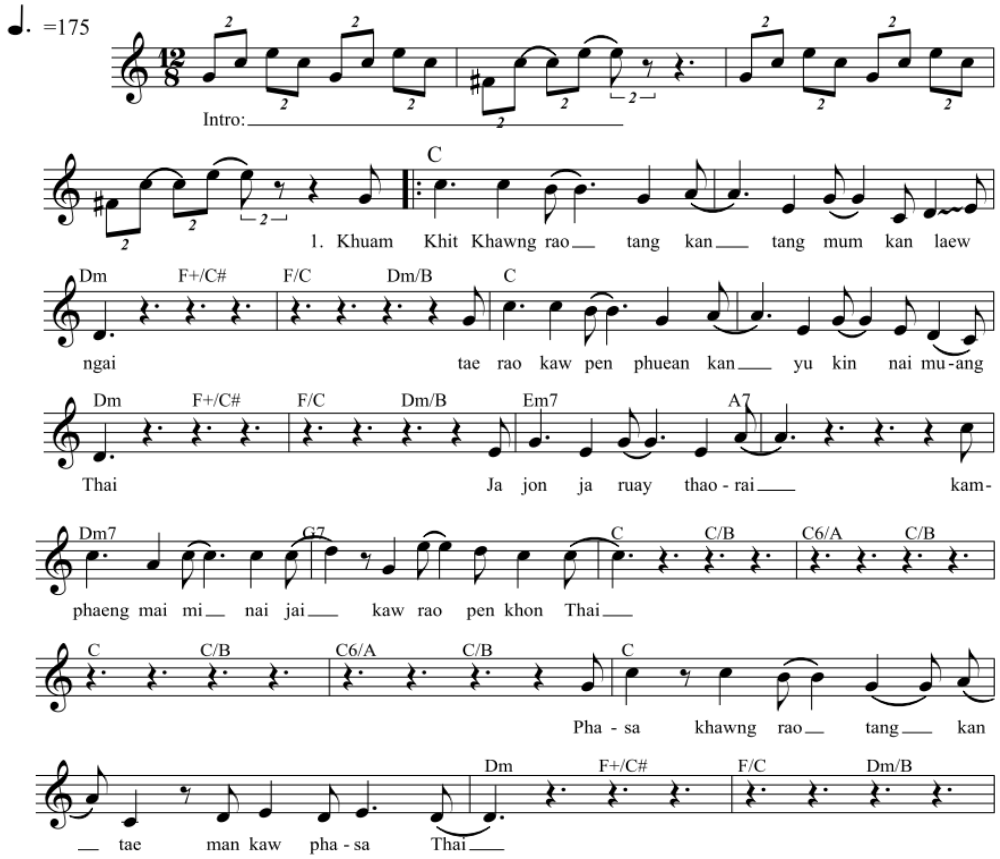

Figure 3: Transcription (verse 1) of *Rao Pen Khon Thai.*

Petch Osathanugrah, head of Bangkok University's art gallery, Thai pop star, and #28 on Thailand's richest as listed in *Forbes* magazine of 2013, released "*Rao Pen Khon Thai*" in 2010 as a call for national peace after a prolonged political battle between primarily rural and north-northeastern "red shirts" and central-urban "yellow shirts" (as represented by then PM Abhisit Vejjajiva).

Writing for *The Nation*, Kitchana Lersakvanitchakul discusses the sound of the piece as well as its means of representing the nation, describing it as "pop mixed with electronic and acoustic music and ends with Isaan folk and a chorus of voices. Why not choose folk music more

representative of the country's four regions?" (Kitchana 5) With the exception of the closing Isaan-style vamp in duple meter, the poppy cosmopolitan swing sound glosses over regional difference, highlighting a national and centripetal Thai-ness in hopes of political reconciliation.

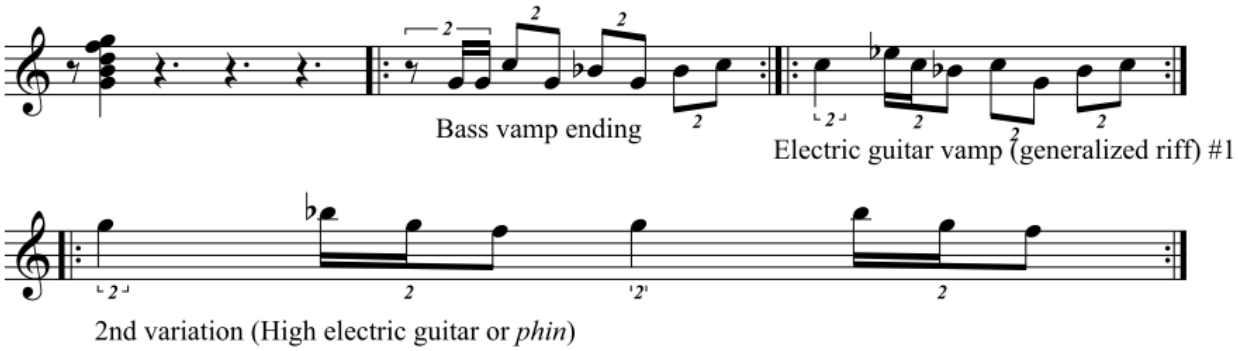

Figure 3: Closing "Isaan-style" vamp section of *Rao Pen Khon Thai*

Petch himself describes his goal, saying, "I would like everybody whether red or yellow in sympathy to forget about color and attitude while listening to them and take time to understand their lyrics. Then, the songs will take root in our hearts and reduce our violence. At last, we will apologize to each other" (Kitchana 2). Yet his message of unity in diversity—represented humorously with look-alike actors portraying a dancing and embracing Thaksin and Abhisit in the accompanying music video—inherently privileges central conceptions of unity in hopes that the long-held tripartite Thai devotion to Nation/race (*chat*), religion (*satsana*), and monarchy (*Phramahakasat*)[13] can withstand political and regional fracturing. A look at the lyrics provides a sense of just how embedded he is in nationalist discourse:

> *So what if our opinions are different?*
> *We are friends, we live together in Thailand*
> *Whether rich or poor, there are no walls in our hearts*
> *We are Thai.*
>
> *Our languages are different, but they are all Thai*
> *Though accents are different, we understand each other*
> *No matter how angry we get, we can forgive one another*
> *Because we are Thai*

Come a bit closer so I can examine your heart
I want to know what you think
Cast off your arrogance, consuming sorrow, and confusion
You and I, we are all Thai.

Our opinions and views were different yesterday
We have conversed and loved each other for ages
No matter what region we come from,
There are no walls in our hearts
We are Thai[14]

In Petch's depiction, ethno-national sentiment trumps not only political factions (as represented in his continued use of *khuam khit*, or opinions/ideas) but also regional ones. In his verses, "Thai-ness" (*khuampen khon Thai*) emerges superior: regional languages are reduced to "dialects" of a larger organizing entity—Thainess— and regions themselves are subsumed by the Thai national borders that have engulfed them.

Petch's center-out, ethno-linguistic precedents of a united Thai people in song contrasts quite markedly with musical expressions that emerged from the northern region of the nation decades prior. Northern folksongs, first popularized in the Lanna renaissance of the 1970s, highlight the distinctiveness of "Lanna" music, people, and heritage (Ferguson 2010; Bussakorn and Binson 2011).[15] When I first began my musical studies with *Khru* "Tom" Sareeyoth Na Savipornwusahim,[16] the first song in the repertoire was Jaran Manopetch's iconic "*Long Mae Ping*" ("Floating down the Ping River"). This song served as the quintessential introductory piece for any new student encountering Lanna music.[17] When I accompanied *Khru* Tom to his school outreach teaching activities at *Ban Nawnghan* school,[18] the first song his elementary school students learned was "*Long Mae Ping*" [CD track 03]. When *Khru* Tom had me perform at a *wai khru* ceremony for *Khru* Aed,[19] he introduced me by saying, "This is Ben, a foreigner who has come to study with me. Today he will be performing—can you guess what song?"

Everyone in the crowd laughed and chimed in, revealing the obvious choice: "*Long Mae Ping!*" When *Khru* Tom's weekend amateur community group of *Chumchon Suan Dawk* performed in the annual *Sao Inthakhin* city pillar festival at *Wat Chedi Luang* temple, our opening number: *"Long Mae Ping.*" In my randomized street interviews throughout Chiang Mai city inquiring about the most representative or famous traditional northern song, an overwhelming majority chose this same piece by Jaran Manopetch (see appendix 1). *Long Mae Ping* serves as the stereotypical and preferred representative of northern Thai musical expression, culture, and character, and, upon analysis, has much to offer in the investigation of relations between the center (represented by Bangkok) and the north (represented by Chiang Mai, and Chiang Mai legendary women in particular). [CD track 05]

To begin discussion of the song, I offer a visual representation of the sonic experience, beginning with the local representation. Northern Thai music, like its central counterpart, makes use of a modified solfège notation system[20] first introduced and popularized around the later years of famous master *Ranad-ek* (xylophone) musician Luang Phadit Phairot (1881-1954)[21]. This system uses Thai consonants to represent scale degrees, serving as a skeletal structure used by beginners and advanced players alike—as skill improves, improvisation is encouraged (Myers-Moro 102). From this notational system, a picture of the pentatonic duple sound of *"Long Mae Ping"* emerges. Here, I offer the northern Thai representation followed by my transcription in western notation.

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Figure 5: Thai solfège notation of "Long Mae Ping" by Jaran Manopetch[22]

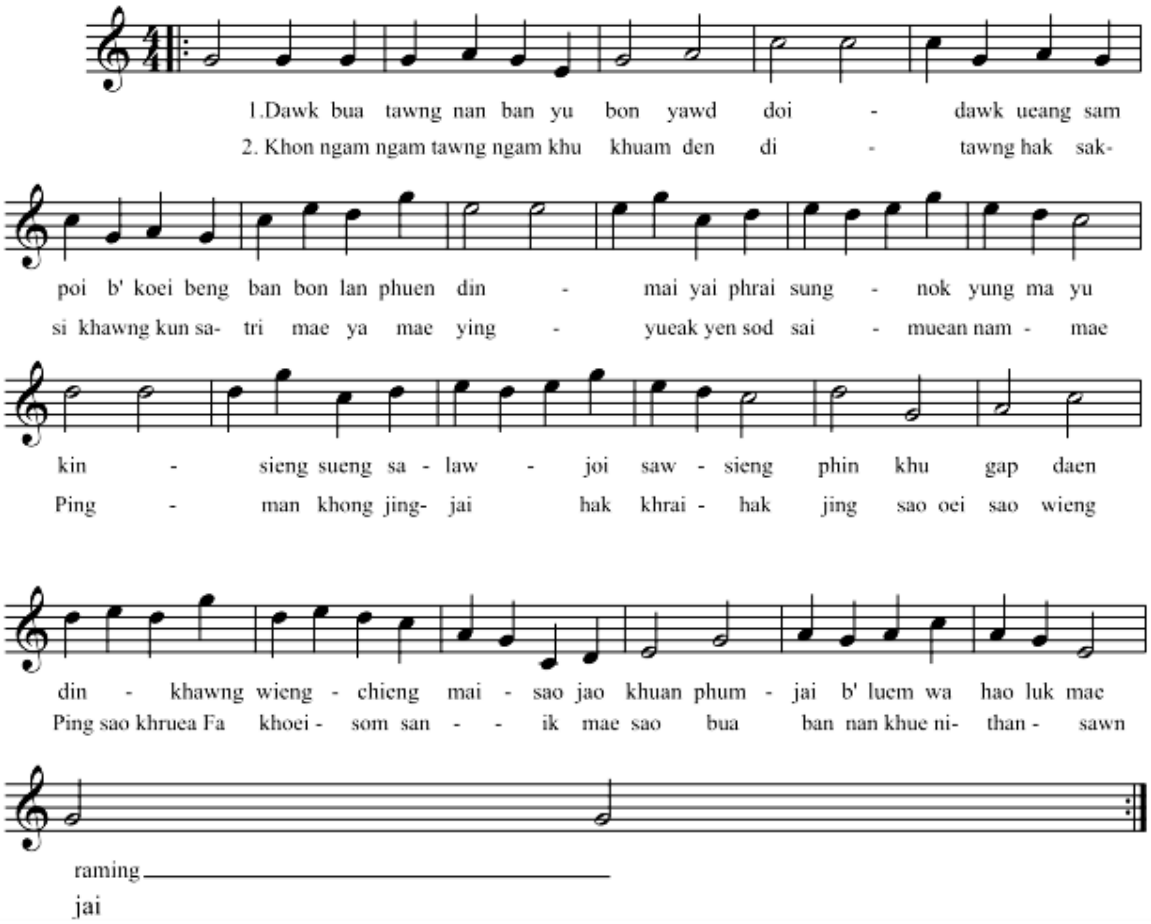


Figure 6: Western notation rendering of "Long Mae Ping" with lyrics. [23]

Compared to Petch's *"Rao Pen Khon Thai,*" Jaran Manopetch's pentatonic scale implies and employs a much more "folksy" aesthetic.[24] In fact, Petch's and Jaran Manopetch's pieces both borrow heavily from international (western) popular genres, but while Petch's upbeat electrified piece comes across as urban, modern, and supra-regional in its international sound, *"Long Mae Ping"* capitalizes on a 1970s American folk genre that indexes wide open spaces, rural identity, and nostalgia for place (Ferguson 228). This pairing of an internationally-known genre for decidedly local representation might be best described by Anna Tsing's notion of "national cosmopolitanism, that is, a world-embracing standard that enters local notions of nation-making" (133), though in this case the cause is autochthonous, reactionary, ethnic, and

decidedly anti-national in application. Perhaps "autochthonous cosmopolitanism" might make for an appropriate label in Jane Ferguson's exploration of the roots of the genre Jaran is credited with creating: *Folk Song Kam Mueang*.[25] Ferguson summarizes:

> During the "American Era" in Thailand (1958-78), a major military presence introduced many iconic trends in American media, including the politically-motivated music of Bob Dylan and Joan Baez. This spurred an activist genre called "*Phleng Phuea Chiwit*" (songs for life), which allied itself largely with the student movement of the 1970s and popularized "folk" as a genre. These political-musical attitudes led to Jaran Manopetch's spearheading of the region-specific Northern Thai Folksong, the first to celebrate unapologetically the northern dialect and "rural" lifestyle in what had been an era of Thai nationalization. (231)

Jaran Manopetch's music emerged in the 1970s after nearly a century of central Thai policies suppressing northern expression (McGraw 2007), and the lyrics of "*Long Mae Ping"* specifically mention Lanna instruments—*Salaw* (two-string bowed lute with coconut body), *Sueng* (fretted, plucked chordophone with 4 strings), and *Phin Pia* (see below)—that were effectively banned during Bangkok's modernizing nationalist campaigns. For example, Andrew McGraw, in tracing the history of the *phin pia*— a plucked stick zither unique to Lanna with its coconut resonator and metal head stock— points to legislation that effectively outlawed *phin pia* performance. It was a quiet instrument (the player only plucked harmonics) that would be held against the shirtless male body while courting a woman, but its use receded under pressure from Bangkok. According to McGraw,

> Viewed as a primitive relic of a bygone age, the *pia* was banned from performance or performers were strongly dissuaded from performing in public. During the mid-twentieth century the central government instituted a variety of sweeping social changes in the north, banning certain practices viewed as uncivilized. Northerners were forbidden from chewing betel nut or dressing in distinctively pre-modern northern fashions. In this context, performing the *pin pia* shirtless may have appeared especially uncultivated, or criminal. (126)[26] [27]

Gerald Dyck was all but ready to declare the instrument extinct (Dyck 1969), but the renaissance

of Lanna culture in the 70s, starting with the music of Jaran Manopetch, eventually brought the *phin pia* back [CD track 07]. Manopetch now represents a watershed figure of this movement, where Lanna identity, landscape, language, and dress came to be celebrated, usually casting Bangkok figures as the other or enemy. As the father of the *Folk Song Khammueang* movement, "[Manopetch's] unapologetic display of Northern cultural identity through recordings and video helped reinvigorate a society that had grown away from its roots at the time" (Akins and Bussakorn, 252). I will return to the historical roots that led up to these regional-national ethnic conflicts after continuing on with a discussion of the lyrics of Jaran Manopetch's piece next.

Floating Down the Ping River: Mountains, Flowers, Instruments, and Love Stories

Tuesday, June 4, 2013. I had arrived just the day before and was walking down Ratchapakhinai road through the old walled city of Chiang Mai, looking for a place to stay. I had just put down a deposit on a guest house when a robed monk rounded the corner. He stopped me and asked what I was doing and whether I was busy; I did not have a good enough answer. *Phra* Alek[28] introduced himself and took me on a tour of *Wat Chedi Luang*, the most historic and iconic temple in the exact geographic center of the city, easily recognized by its now-toppled stupa that was initiated in 1391 under the reign of Saen Muang Ma (1386-1401), the 7th monarch in the reign of Chiang Mai's founder, Mangrai, and finally finished in Tilokaraj's reign (Phra Buddhapotchanavarabhom 17; Wyatt 67). The *Chedi Luang* temple complex once housed the famed Emerald Buddha from 1468-ca. 1548 (38), is the site of Chiang Mai's sacred city pillar of Indra (*Inthakin* in Thai) erected in 1296 C.E. by King Mangrai at the *mueang*'s founding, marks the centripetal axis of Lanna power, and houses the spirit of the kingdom (1; Wyatt 73). Andrew Johnson argues that the pillar operates as a site of sacred power (*barami*) rooted in indigenous *Lawa* spirituality:

> While, according to contemporary spirit mediums, Tai spirits are generally considered to have come from elsewhere, Lawa spirits represent the soil of Chiang Mai. By tracing the pillar back to the Lawa, the cult of the Inthakin defines Chiang Mai as an indigenous part of the landscape, naturalizing a Northern Thai Buddhist hold over the area, which, while foreign, has appropriated the indigenous and animist powers of the Lawa for the city. The pillar, in turn, becomes an antenna by which the merit of the Lanna king radiates out to the countryside, bringing rain and causing the crops to grow. (52)

Phra Alek walked me through the grounds of *Chedi Luang* as we exchanged information and personal narratives. He was studying for his PhD in public administration (the temple also houses a university), and I was studying music. I asked him if he was familiar with the lyrics to *"Long Mae Ping*," which, to him, was laughable. Of *course* he knew them! Didn't everybody here? Verse one is translated as follows:

> *The Sunflower blooms on the mountain top;*
> *The orchids do not grow on the ground, but*
> *on big trees in tall forests, in the dwelling of the peacock.*
> *The sound of the* sueng, salaw, saw, *and* phin[29]
> *These are synonymous with the land of Chiang Mai*
> *Ladies, be proud. Do not forget we are children of the Raming River*[30]

This verse draws attention to the distinctive geo-cultural aspects of Lanna while implying a distinctive ethnic status, a must for any campaign to identify the "we-self" and the "other" (Thongchai 1994: 164). Here, we learn of the unique (though not indigenous)[31] sunflowers (*dawk bua tawng*) that only bloom in the high northern mountains, usually more associated with Mae Hong Sawn province than Chiang Mai (but either way, they are an exclusive feature of the north). Orchids also index a high elevation, distant from the lowland and central Thai kingdom.[32] Added to the mountains and flowers are the regional musical instruments—*sueng*, *salaw*, *phin pia*, and *saw* singing style. The rivers mentioned in verse one also draw attention to geographical boundaries. Place binds, delimits, and reifies ethnic borders (Thongchai 1994: 16).

Phra Alek mused over the meanings of this first verse, pointing to civic and moral

responsibilities. For him, the song itself was a kind of instructional myth aimed at teaching northern people how to live. In his view, "The Ping River is our public space. We should take care of it. It should be so clean that anyone could bathe in it" (*Phra* Alex, personal interview). His discussion lingered on the second verse, where legendary local women became national metaphors.

> *Beautiful people, your beauty must be matched with goodness.*
> *You must love honorably, like a noble woman, like our forebears*
> *Calm, and effervescent, like the Mae Ping river*
> *Sincere, true. Whoever you love, love them genuinely*
> *Oh, daughters of* [*Nakhorn*] *Phing,*
> Khruea Fa *who was shamed, and* Bua Ban*:*
> *Let these be cautionary tales for you.*

This verse called to *Phra* Alek's mind an important figure in Lanna identity: Chiang Mai's beloved Princess Dararasmi (1873-1933)— the daughter of Chiang Mai's last king, Inthawichayanon (r.1870-1897) before Bangkok's takeover of the Lanna kingdom— who was betrothed to King Chulalongkorn, Rama V (1853-1910). This marriage alliance effectively formalized the annexation of Lanna to Siam. Dararasmi is still a leading figure in Lanna cultural identity, as it is said she brought Lanna court music to the palace of Bangkok and while there served as an outspoken supporter and defender of Lanna identity (expressed through her dress, music, long hair, and diet), for which she was mocked by other harem members of the central court (Renard 1999: 88). She lived in the royal palace in Bangkok for 20 years before returning to Chiang Mai in 1914 following Chulalongkorn's death, and was the first to bring court music and dance out of the northern royal spaces for public consumption. While not specifically named in "*Long Mae Ping,*" *Phra* Alek and others I interviewed suggested that this song alludes to her metaphorically, or "we" northern women in general, since it speaks of northern women's devotion, a quality attributed to Dararasmi's relationship with Chulalongkorn.[33, 34]

While Princess Dararasmi's story may be only implied by the lyrics of "*Long Mae Ping*," two other Lanna women are specifically mentioned in Jaran Manopetch's song: *Sao* Khruea Fa and *Sao* Bua Ban. As popular myths (also adapted to plays, movies, and TV soap operas), they serve as powerful metaphors of central Thai treachery and infidelity, which gives them prominence in regional heritage movements that challenge central Thai colonization and modernization narratives (Thongchai 1996; Jory 1999). Also, they are grounded in historic and/or popular knowledge as well as place. Several stories of deceived Chiang Mai women reference the iconic Huay Kaew waterfalls of Doi Suthep, the tall mountain immediately to the west of the old walled city. Renard (1999) discusses the details of *Sao* Khruea Fa, a character from a play inspired by *Madame Butterfly*, the Puccini opera first seen by King Chulalongkorn on a trip through Europe in 1907 and relayed to Prince Naradhip (1891-1976), who rewrote a Thai version.[35] In this play, a womanizing air force pilot from Bangkok (Phrom) has a fling with the devoted and *jing-jai* (true-hearted) *Sao* Khruea Fa, a girl from Chiang Mai, who kills herself after he leaves her (1999: 92).

The *Sao* Bua Ban myth echoes the same ideas and sentiments of the *Sao* Khruea Fa story, and it also seems grounded in some historic truth. One version of *Sao* Bua Ban was narrated by documentarian Bunsi Na Chiangmai. In this account, Bua Ban was the most beautiful girl in all of Lanna. She was also a teacher at Wat Fa Ham School (near the intersection of the Ping river and the Super Highway just outside the old city) during the 1940s. A soldier from Bangkok was stationed there, charged with establishing a military post. The two fell in love, but the government called him back to Bangkok. He promised to return and marry Bua Ban, but, since (unbeknownst to Bua Ban) he already had a wife in Bangkok, this was never to happen. Bua Ban waited, patiently, devotedly, and soon discovered she was pregnant. When she realized that the

soldier was not coming back, she jumped from the cliffs of Huay Kaew waterfall, killing herself and the baby.[36]

There are other versions and variations. In one telling, Bua Ban and the soldier had a big fight and he left. In another, she got involved not with a soldier but with a fellow teacher (from Bangkok) who did not tell her he was already married and had children. She, not wanting to be a mistress, tried to convince him to confess to his wife and leave her, but he would not, and Bua Ban then mysteriously "slipped" and fell off the cliffs at Huay Kaew. A fourth version (local folktale from 1979) tells of a wealthy school principal with a gambling problem who used Bua Ban's love and devotion, taking all of her family money to unsuccessfully pay his debts. She was devastated, and jumped to her death. Suthatip Sawangphon, a researcher at Chiang Mai University, investigated this last version and interviewed Bua Ban's surviving family. Reportedly, they confirmed that the corrupt principal was from the central region (though the details of her death were still unconfirmed. Perhaps it was a suicide. Perhaps an accident).[37]

Ronald Renard (1999) also briefly mentions Bua Ban in his critique of Bangkok's historical rewrite of Thai history and 19th century disgust and distrust of Chiang Mai, pointing to the myth's position in pitting local versus national interest. He remarks,

> Not quite lost in the oral traditions of Chiang Mai are accounts of unscrupulous central officials seeking to take advantage of the people of the north. A famous story of the young woman named Buaban, deceived by a flirtatious central Thai, and who then jumped to her death off a waterfall on Doi Suthep is still told in song. (1999: 91)

While the stories differ in some of the details, the myth's message emerges clearly as a statement of the local being deceived, abused, and betrayed by the higher-ranking outsider. In the case of Bua Ban, the "We-self" is the virtuous and innocent Lanna female while the untrustworthy "other" is the male Bangkok figure who takes advantage of Lanna beauty and goodness for his

own pleasure. As Donald Swearer remarks, "Myths and legends…have greater import than factual history for the on-going life of a people…they give a commentary on what a people has held and holds to be of lasting value" (70-71). In telling this myth—or in embedding and indexing the story in the most well-known Lanna folk song— the female character's goodness projects out to all who claim northern identity while the deceitful male extends to a general distrust of Bangkok.[38] Solidarity and distinctiveness are both reinforced by the presence of a common enemy. The colonial annexation of the Lanna Kingdom is remembered retold as subtext in a myth of love. The myth allows for an idealized set of "facts" that take their cues from history even as they address current we-self identity formation.

***Long Mae Ping*, Take Two: The Invasion**

Looming beneath these stories of love and heartbreak is a larger, uneasy discourse on the nation and the colonization of landscapes and bodies.[39] I offer two anecdotes here as evidence of these values. The larger issue of colonization and Thai nationalism begins to emerge here in this song.

On Saturday, June 8, 2013, *Khru* Tom had been preparing the amateur Suan Dawk community group for the performance at the annual Sao Inthakhin City Pillar Festival. The group, a mix of regulars and less-dependable (and less musical) members, met twice a week on weekends, and I had joined them as Tom's student. We knew three songs: "*Long Mae Ping*," "*Soi Wieng Ping*," and "*Mu Hao Jao Nuea.*" This last piece is near-universally known as the unofficial Northern Thai anthem. Our rehearsal had gone from noon to 3pm, and now everyone was sitting around in their best outfits, chatting and passing the time eating *somtam* (papaya salad) as we waited for the arrival of our hired *songthaew*.[40] Tim, one of the group members, invited me over to her noodle stand across the street to eat. Her husband, Yang, sat on a leather

sofa by the front door and was watching TV.

Yang had been helping me translate the northern *khammueang* vocabulary of "*Long Mae Ping*" into central Thai. As noted in Ferguson's exploration of *Folksong Khammueang*, this is not always needed, as Jaran Manopetch's music usually employed a watered-down *khammueang* that was more or less accessible to Bangkok audiences, a dialect she calls "Lanna 'lite'" (232), where some of the conventional transpositions are fairly standardized and predictable.[41] I asked Yang what he thought about "*Long Mae Ping.*" He leaned forward and raised a finger in the air. "It's all about our Princess Dararasmi, who married Rama V and brought back new ideas to life and music in the north." For him, the connection was instant. The mythic figures of Lanna women marrying men from Bangkok fused to national history and the Lanna kingdom itself—hitched to Bangkok. Yang was rather jovial about the prospect and focused on celebrating Dararasmi's contribution to Lanna culture through using the prestigious court to legitimate it via performance (Sharhriari 8).

Others paint a less than rosy picture. I had taken a group tour of the museum at the Chiang Mai Arts and Cultural Center with retired professor Rieng, a loud and proud "Red Shirt" supporter of former Prime Minister Thaksin and all things local and northern (and perhaps Chinese). He spoke loudly as he guided us through the museum, attracting other followers not originally with our initial group. The museum traces the trajectory of Lanna all the way from pre-history through the present, folding Lanna history into the trajectory of Thailand's national development. One of the final exhibits one passes through as they walk through a timeline of historic events is the railroad room. The railway was completed in 1921, connecting and integrating Chiang Mai's economy to Bangkok (Kakizaki 2005) and spurring an influx of goods while encouraging the exportation of raw materials from the north (Sarassawadee 213). Our

guide gathered us all in the space and had us face the model locomotive.

> Do you see this? Do you know what they tell us this is? Look at the sign they have provided. They called it *innovation*. Innovation! Do you know what I say? Not *innovation* but *invasion*!

His language and attitude captures the spirit of some of the more vocal and extreme expressions of regional pride and anger over what some call colonization of Lanna by Bangkok. It also shows agency and the opportunity for unintended contestation of the museum's fixed narratives. Here, the (albeit passive) participation in, or tuning in to, the museum script veered off to new territory, and the locus of authority shifted from the canned script to the vocal participant. Just as a song's lyrics may be interpreted in ways the artist never intended, the historical script of museums may encounter similar resistance, appropriation, and rewriting. A brief summary of this narration of "Lanna" history is in order.

Lanna History (1296-1896, or 1932)

Jaran Manopetch's *"Long Mae Ping"* and the type of regional pride expressed by Professor Riang are informed by a long history of Bangkok encroaching into Lanna space, territory and governance. A once-independent kingdom experienced a gradual diminishing of its power as modern nation-building schemes from Bangkok uprooted and replaced local means of expression and rule. This history, now contained within Thai bordered and national space, is now interpreted through a lens of northern Thai heritage recognition since the 1970s renaissance—what Anthony Smith would term a "useable past" (1997: 37)— that was very much catalyzed by Jaran Manopetch's music and unapologetic celebration of Lanna (i.e. northern Thai) expression (Ferguson 228; Johnson 514). This section details this historical narrative as viewed from central and local perspectives.

Rising behind the famed Three Kings Monument (celebrating King Mangrai's

collaboration with Ramkhamhaeng of Sukothai and Ngam Mueang of Phayao to find an auspicious site for his new kingdom), the museum's location itself presents a microcosm of Lanna history and colonized experience, according to Andrew Johnson. He remarks,

> This structure was the former site of a Lanna-era royal palace, but when Chiang Mai became incorporated into the Siamese nation-state, such a system of (local) monarch-oriented space would not do politically. Instead, the Chiang Mai royalty was, through a series of both coercive and cajoling actions, removed from power…The central city square became the new city hall, and significantly the old royal residence was converted to a women's prison…Finally, when the city hall moved out of the city centre, the Three Kings Monument then became a site of a cultural museum, creating a trajectory whereby royal power becomes state power becomes cultural heritage. (2011: 514)

Jory (1999), Johnson (2014), and Ferguson (2010) both point to the contemporary marketability of this heritage and local identity. Jory argues that regional ethnic identities are spreading due primarily to market forces, saying they are now "seen as a valuable commodity" (347). In other words, "As diversity is transformed from security threat to tourism asset the state itself has begun to reassess Thailand's ethnic makeup for marketing purposes" (348). Johnson speaks of northern culture (*watthanatham*) as a local and unique resource that inspires progress (*charoen*) and instills pride (2014: 68). Ferguson also notes that Lanna identity has been reconstructed since the 1970s as nostalgic authenticity that sells well to high-society tourists from Bangkok, though she does leave the possibility open for a collaboration, contestation, and multiple negotiations in the vein of Tsing's "friction" (4), where a rustic Lanna identity is mutually negotiated (through employing cosmopolitan ideas) to serve both locals and the expectations of Bangkok/foreign tourists. Here, Lanna identity is reformulated while projecting, through *Folksong Khammueang,* an image of rural authenticity or "rusticity" that Bangkok is said to lack (Amphorn 2006). But, still, there is ultimately a bottom line. For Ferguson, too,

> A Northern Thai musician takes on the U.S. cowboy attire and symbols to

> leapfrog a modernity mediated by Bangkok and to inform a Northern Thai traditionalism (which, in turn, becomes a product that can be consumed by Central Thais). (237)

Lanna's history, from self-governing kingdom to suzerainty to ultimate submission to Bangkok helps to frame and understand these politicized (and marketed) sites of Lanna cultural heritage in the 20th and 21st century.

Two accounts of Chiang Mai exemplify the disconnect between central and northern historic framings. M.L. Manich Jumsai's (1972) *Popular History of Thailand* offers the beginnings of the Lanna kingdom in agreement with the early years portrayed by Sarassawadee Ongsakul's *History of Lanna* (2005), but they each offer a situated account of the Lanna kingdom's present. For Manich, the Lanna kingdom is a trail of Tai migration out of China offering a natural trajectory headed ultimately to the ethnic Thais of Bangkok's rule—Lanna here is a Tai stepping stone to Thailand and Thai-ness (see Renard 1999:89). After Chiang Mai fell to Burmese king Bayinnaung in 1558, its regional rule and history is mostly overlooked as "Thai" history shifts its focus to Ayutthaya. As Chiang Mai changed hands, moving from Burmese colony to Siamese possession under the leadership of monarch Jao Kawila (r. 1796-1813), later historians would need to justify the contemporary national borders of Thailand. This nationalist project can be seen in the renaming of the country from the ethnically neutral "Siam" to the ethnically specific "Thailand" (Jory 338) as well as the 20th century reframing (or appropriation) of "Lanna" as "Lannathai" (Johnson 2011: 514; Shahriari 2001: 4).[42] These types of accounts point to a central Thai conception of a past stretching back to Sukothai and Lanna, a notion that glosses over any distinctiveness of colonized vassal kingdoms under a modern nation-state view where ethnic and political borders need to be or are presented as coterminous (Thongchai 1994; Eriksen 7). Manich's account of Chiang Mai effectively ends at the fall of

Ayuthaya (149) and a united front against Burma dichotomized political and ethnic allegiances. From then on, his account aligns with Petch Osathanugrah's song, and everyone is Thai, regardless of differences.

Sarassawadee's account of Lanna history gives an account of Chiang Mai from a perspective where it is the center and Bangkok is the encroacher. The walled city of Chiang Mai was founded on April 12, 1296 C.E. by *Phaya* (king) Mangrai of Yonok. Constructed with the input of two nearby kings, Ngam Muang of Payao and Ruang (Ramkhamhaeng) of Sukothai, the Lanna kingdom was multicultural and inclusive, bringing multiple ethnic groups together under one ruling power and one emerging polity-based Tai Yuan (northern Thai) common identity. The concept of a city pillar, Sarassawadee argues, is a remnant of local Lawa belief, a concept that demonstrates that Lanna cosmology borrowed from indigenous groups and, thus, was distinct from central Thai belief (32).[43] [44]Mangrai died in 1317—reportedly struck by lightning (Manich 35) — but the kingdom's Golden Age (1355-1525) continued after a power struggle among his many descendants, with Chiang Mai as the cultural, political, and economic capital. While Chiang Mai made significant gains and prospered through the early 16th century, it was eventually weakened by extended wars with Ayutthaya and conquered by King Bayinnaung from neighboring Burma in 1558. Chiang Mai kings still occupied the throne, but the kingdom was a vassal state under Burmese oversight, remaining as such until 1774, when an alliance between Jao Kawila and King Taksin of Thonburi (1734-1782) marked the ending of the oppressive Burmese occupation and the beginnings of Lanna's vassalage and tributary relationship with Bankok's *Cakri* dynasty.

Sarasawdee portrays this alliance as a necessity but also argues that the political alliance did not sow any seeds of ethnogenesis. While the Thai king (of Chinese ancestry) Taksin offered

protection to northern states, locals maintained their own leadership. Sarasawadee notes, "Cultural difference between [Siam and Lanna] meant that the Siamese considered Lanna a foreign land" (129). This period, where Lanna submitted to Siam as tributary (1774-1899) marks the beginnings of the contested history—nationalist perspectives argue for the formalizing of ethnic borders while Lanna records push for distinctiveness.

Liberated from Burmese subjugation, Lanna was brought under central Thai *Cakri* dynastic rulership, serving as check on Burmese raids to Vientiene and other northern strongholds. Chiang Mai was rebuilt under king Kawila's guidance (r. 1796-1813), and it was Kawila who would convince the nobles of Lanna and other northern kingdoms to join him in paying tribute to Bangkok's *Rama* kings. Kawila marked the first of a line of seven kings (the *Chao Chet Ton* dynasty) who worked to restore the greatness of Chiang Mai. Sarasawadee maintains that this project was informed by autochthony: "The *Chao chet Ton* was set on replacing the Mangrai dynasty and carrying on local customs" (136).

However, as the western colonial powers began their encroachment (Britain in Burma and France in Cambodia) during the reign of *Rama* II (r. 1809-1824), Bangkok began to assume an increasing role in Lanna's governance. When Chiang Mai's King Kawilorot (r.1856-1870) refused to acknowledge Britain's 1855 Bowring Treaty opening up Siamese trade with the west by eliminating tariffs and local monopolies, Mongkhut (*Rama* IV) made the acceptance of the treaty a prerequisite for Kawilorot's successor, Inthawichayanon (r.1873-1896) (Sarasawadee 148). Indeed, the entry of Western powers into Siamese politics marked a significant moment for Lanna autonomy, as the modernizing campaigns of Chulalongkorn Rama V obliterated local and traditional power and policies under the guise of "administrative reform" (167).

As Lanna's role in the Bowring Treaty was participation in the trade of teak wood, the

year 1896 is important as it marked the end of Inthawichayanon's reign, the formal annexation of Lanna to Siam, and also the establishment of the Thai Royal Forestry Department (169).[45] The teak trade was one of the most important drivers (for the British) in establishing the modern, western concept of national borders. Western traders wanted to know where to get permission to remove trees from forests to the west of Chiang Mai: Bangkok or Burma (Thongchai 1994:70)? At this point, Lanna had limited bargaining power and claims to local resources, and market activity fueled by western demands resulted in action being taken to formalize the legal international northwestern border of the Kingdom of Siam (Sarasawadee 180). In this process of bordering, national conceptions and modernization programs became the norm.

Sarasawadee points to the assimilationist language of Bangkok administrators. A letter from the great modernizer King Chulalongkorn *Rama V* to the appointed administrator of newly annexed Lanna proposes a strategy:

> It will be a tributary state as long as we don't think to eliminate its royalty. But we wish to hold real power… to make [Lanna] like a machine that we can control or guide forward as we please…However, it is necessary to use intelligence more than force; we must not make them feel oppressed, and must point out the advantages of change and the disadvantages of the current situation as the basis. (Sarasawadee 182)

Rama V launched a series modernizing reforms, resulting in the formalization of borders through modern mapping technology, consolidation of central rule under the *Monthon* (1884-1892) and later *Thesaphiban* (1899-1933) governing system (with centrally appointed department administrators and governors) as the vassal state became redefined as a province, and a reduction of power and influence of the regional nobility. Chiang Mai kings were replaced by Bangkok-appointed ministers.[46] Bangkok centralized religious orders in 1902 with the *Sangha* Act and educational instruction in the national language and script was enforced beginning in

1903 (210-12).[47] These modernization methods were also reconfirmed by the time-honored tradition of marriage alliances, as seen in the marriage of *Rama V* and Dararasmi. Sarassawadee concludes, saying, "Gradually, the traditional character of Lanna broke down in virtually every area, from politics, the economy, society, and education to religion, the arts, and culture" (209).

In this telling of history, every distinctive aspect of Lanna culture, tradition, and governance was subsumed by Bangkok's encroachment. The railroad connected Lampang to Bangkok in 1916, and it reached Chiang Mai by 1921. Roads came soon after, connecting local economies to Bangkok and the market, eliminating what was at one time a northern royal monopoly and source of income. A decree in 1926 proclaimed that local rulers, upon their death, would not be replaced (213). In 1932, Chiang Mai officially became a province of the nation of Siam. Lanna was now history.

From Sarassawadee's perspective, Bangkok pushed out all local representation and expression. But Bangkok acted out of necessity, according to historians; modernization was, for them, the only way to prevent colonization by the west. By revamping the country along international standards, Siam could retain its sovereignty. Local autonomous polities did not work in a world governed by national borders. This is no consolidation, though. Thongchai (1996) sums up the historic disconnect well:

> In the Bangkok perspective, the annexation of former tributaries became the 'reform of provincial administration' over its outlying provinces; the expansion became the 'defense' of its territorial integrity; the resistance by some tributaries became 'internal' conflict, as opposed to the European 'outsider' threat; and the successful 'reform' became an emancipation of those tributaries from slavery and semi-vassalage to begin self-government. Indeed, if we merely change the point of view, the story of the administrative reform could be read very much like a history of colonization. (1996: 88)

Or, as Professor Rieng put it, "Invasion, not innovation."

Bring Back the Music

This history highlights the importance and context of Jaran Manopetch's 1970s revival of Lanna heritage through *Folksong Khammueang.* This genre, invented in the 1970s and inspired by the American Folk movement, borrows a rustic ideal from 1950s and 60s Hollywood cowboy films, making it simultaneously rural and international, traditional and cosmopolitan. After decades of intense nationalism post-annexation, Ferguson argues that the genre has one goal:

> The particular genre of *Folksawng Kham Mueang*…represents an assertion of regional language within the molding of a transnational musical genre, whose raison d'être is to distinguish northern Thai identity in the face of over a century of Central Thai (Bangkok) cultural and political domination. (228)

While varied scholarly accounts (Sarassawadee 2005; Jory 1999; Amporn 2006; Akins and Bussakorn 2011; Johnson 2011; Thongchai 1995; Suwichan 2011; Dyck 1969; McGraw 2007) provide a sense of *why* this reframing came about in relation to history, the *how* of musical endeavors still remains. In the next section, I introduce a final performance with *Khru* Tom in light of Thomas Turino's theory of participatory musical activity.

Music as Social Life: Participating in and Performing the North

Thomas Turino (2008) posits that music is a public expression of collective social identity—necessary, since social groups provide a basic primate/human survival tactic (2). He also discusses the actual processes of human interpretation and internalization by employing Charles Pierce's semiotic triangle—with music serving as icon, index, and symbol— and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's concept of "flow", defined as

> A state of heightened concentration, when one is so intent on the activity at hand that all other thoughts, concerns, and distractions disappear and the actor is fully in the present. The experience actually leads to a feeling of timelessness, or being out of normal time, and to feelings of transcending one's normal self. (4)

For Turino, the rewarding experience of flow, experienced particularly in what he calls

"participatory" musical activity (more on this shortly), creates deep and meaningful memories, linked semiotically via indexical processes where the activity (i.e., *Songkhran,* Thai New Year) operates as the object or sign as indexed by a musical association typically experienced simultaneously.[48] In combining a musical activity that had resulted in a psychological state of "flow" with a powerful memory attached to cultural heritage, music becomes a powerful object for forging collective identity and nostalgia (Yano 178). Chris Waterman (1990) echoes this idea, saying, "the special world of time and sentiment generated in musical performance is regarded as an ideal environment for the public presentation and negotiation of identity" (216).

Ultimately, the outcome of Turino's music as social life—where "music" is defined by process rather than product (Small 1998)—is a coordination of bodies, minds, and collectives. He argues that

> What happens during a good performance is that the multiple differences among us are forgotten and we are fully focused on an activity that emphasizes our *sameness*—of time sense, of musical sensibility, of musical habits and knowledge, of patterns of thought and action, of spirit, of common goals—as well as our direct interaction. Within the bounded and concentrated frame of musical performance, *that sameness* is all that matters, and for those moments when the performance is focused and in sync, that deep identification is *felt* as total. (18, emphasis in the original)

This "sameness" serves as a powerful force for coordinating identity, and control over that message is a battle of rhetorical persuasion. Indeed, the history of Thailand according to Manich is an argument for "Lanna-Thai" sameness and national unity, as is the text of Petch's *"Rao pen khon Thai*." For northern icons, sameness, or social synchrony, is presented as more insular, exclusive, and reactionary. It is a frequent topic among northern Thai music, and an imagined Lanna we-self heritage and the "other" are indexed and experienced in physical movement (distinctive northern *Fawn* dances popularized by Dararasmi [Shahriari 5]), in the singing of

lyrics (both content and dialect [Ferguson 228]), and in the distinctive Lanna instruments (i.e., "*Long Mae Ping*"'s specific mention and usage of the *salaw* and *sueng*). Kin language is also a common topic in lyrics and in conversation, as it exemplifies rural localism or "small town folk" values associated with northerners. Ajaan Chusri, one of my language professors at CMU began class one Monday morning after returning from a weekend trip to Bangkok:

> You would not believe how rude this woman was. I wanted to ask her the price and called to her, as I would to anyone here in the market. '*Phi* [title for an elder sibling, also shows familiarity], how much is this?' You know what she said to me? She said, '*Phi*? Who do you think you are? What do you think we are? I'm not related to you!'

This northern encounter of the Bangkokian typified the stereotype of the central Thai urbanite who has no time or respect for the familial and "old-time" values associated with Chiang Mai's celebrated and/or imagined "Lanna" culture (gentle, familiar, homey)—images that Jory and Ferguson both acknowledge are a significant part of the packaged northern image and expectations of Bangkok tourists who flood the north in search of authenticity and a return to a simpler time. But the packaged, consumable cultural product is only side of the Bangkok-centric story. The image of Lanna heritage is *locally* construed and employed as well. And it is consumed and projected through "participatory" music and celebration.

Pillar of the North: *Sao Inthakhin*

Turino's "participatory music" concept offers a useful model for analyzing an annual event displaying northern heritage. The yearly *Sao Inthakhin* city pillar festival celebrates Chiang Mai's past in a clear statement of northern pride and uniqueness—the pillar, according to Sarassawadee, was not found in any other satellite tributary kingdom in the north, meaning that Chiang Mai was *the* center (Sarassawadee 32, 61). Erected by King Mangrai, it now sits near the exact center of the kingdom in the compound of Chedi Luang temple (moved from its previous

residence at the current site of the Three Kings Monument) (Wyatt 197), where it houses the sacred spirit of the city, situates the kingdom and city, and nostalgically symbolizes the concentrated, spiritual power and the centripetal pull of a great king able to synthesize a diverse set of (Tai-Lua-Indic-Shan-Mon) beliefs and influences (Anderson 1972: 30; Terwiel 159; Tambiah 73). The Chedi Luang stupa, a project initiated by King Saen Muangma (r.1385-1401) in 1391, was, at the time of completion, the tallest in Southeast Asia before partially toppling in an earthquake in 1545 (Phra Buddhapotchanavarabhom 19). Its placement and features made it a formidable earthly mandala embodiment of Mount Meru as it was "orbited" by eight satellite temples within the city (38). This, along with its housing of the emerald Buddha, demonstrates its importance in Lanna history, politics, sacredness, and heritage.

All of the previous paragraph's listings operate as powerful indices of Lanna greatness. Turino's "participatory music" will add another layer to the experience. I begin with a descriptive narrative. *Khru* Tom's Suan Dawk Community group performed on stage at Chedi Luang for the festival on June 8, 2013. The festival typically lasts eight days and features parades, evening performances of local artists and school groups, a carnival atmosphere, and merit making activities such as the *Tham Bun Khan Dawk* (offering flowers and incense sticks). We attempted to drive there from our rehearsal space outside of Suan Dawk temple, which proved impossible and impassable as over 10,000 pedestrians were making their way to the sacred center of the kingdom. Our troupe of musicians walked the last half mile into the city center, where police had shut down the roads as flower and food vendors crammed hundreds of booths immediately outside the temple walls.

Once inside the temple complex, we could barely move. A swarm of people surrounded the city pillar in the southeast corner while steady streams of pedestrians clogged the main

sanctuary, entering and exiting while wading and fishing through the growing pile of removed shoes. A line of vendors flanked the sides of the great stupa, including one that had rigged a rentable pulley system where devotees could fill a joint of bamboo with water, hook it onto a clothesline-type pulley, and try pulling it all the way to the top of the 60-meter-high toppled-stupa without spilling the contents of the vessel. A second rope then allowed them to overturn the bamboo joint, anointing the top of the toppled stupa. While pinwheel-style lights provided a shocking neon rainbow of colors, four separate stages (all within earshot of each other) with amplified music performances sonically competed for attention. Visually and sonically, this is a clear example of Deborah Wong's observed "more is more" Thai aesthetic (1998: 101)—an unfocused or uninitiated individual might feel overwhelmed or assaulted by overstimulation. Indeed, the flustered look of unsuspecting western tourists yelling to—and soon after, *at*—each other provided testament to this.

Our performing group was corralled under a tent by the side of the main stage (the one with the loudest sound system) to wait our turn. My adopted aunt Tim disappeared and reemerged with fried noodles for all to share. As the sun dipped behind Doi Suthep Mountain, about 30 of us made our way up on to the large stage. I sat next to Daeng, an older lady who was a true beginner with a great attitude. As we tuned up and waited for the show to start with or without us, she leaned over to me and said, "I don't remember the music. And that's okay. You can't make a mistake anyway. No one will even hear it. Just keep smiling and play anything." This became our little inside joke throughout the performance. I'd ask, "Daeng, what are you playing?" and she would yell back, "I don't know! Same for you?"

The inclusion of amateurs (or "everyone," ideally) is a requirement for Turino, who defines "participatory music" as

> A special type of artistic practice in which there are no artist-audience distinctions, only participants and potential participants performing different roles, and the primary goal is to involve the maximum number of people in some performance role. (2008: 26)

As if speaking directly to Turino's point, Joel Akins' comment on Lanna music stands out. While it may be the typical (or nostalgically conceived) fact that "long ago, Lanna music and dance was much more participatory. Performers and audiences were not so clearly split into a creator-spectator dichotomy…now this is customary" (2013: 83), this was not the case at the *Sao Inthakin* festival. On the contrary, I witnessed and will describe a scene where, as Turino describes, music was experienced as "heightened social interaction" (28), moving the conception of music to social action from abstract object.[49] Inclusivity is the goal of such musical endeavors, and, combined with a psychologically rewarding state of "flow," musical and kinesthetic unity leads to a deep sense of "social synchrony" (43). These ideas emerged visible as our performance continued on.

Our set list included seven songs, three of which I had learned in my lessons so far with *Khru* Tom. Daeng, myself, and the other beginners were in the second row, visible to onlookers but not close enough for the microphones to pick us up. *Khru* Tom and a few other accomplished musicians sat in the front, and the speakers projected their virtuosic improvisations out to the audience while the less-accomplished musicians provided the skeletal core melody as notated previously (or, if completely at a loss, we just played an improvised drone of open strings DO and SO). Toward the end of our set, we arrived at the few songs we knew, and I began to succumb to non-academic notions of nostalgia, popularly-conceived 'authenticity', and romanticism. I felt myself playing a role, playing this classic Lanna instrument on the sacred grounds of this 700-year-old temple, in the celebration of a lost past in a state of reclamation and

renaissance, experiencing a sense of passion that I thought had been relegated to my undergraduate worldview and writings, and losing track of time as a state of play overtook me. The continuum of participant-observation was tipping toward the former. This was Turino's "flow" state, and it was not just me. While the audience had been observing our performance with varying degrees of interest for the majority of the performance, there was a marked shift as we started in on our show-closing number, "*Mu Hao Jao Nuea*," the unofficial and near-universally known anthem of northern pride [CD track 01, 02].

I looked up and saw thousands of people engaged in participation—bodies moving in time, mouths and voices rising and falling in coordination, and a palpable rise in energy, noise, and camaraderie. Turino, again, points to the very real social and political implications of participatory music, saying

> It is *in the doing* that the feelings and direct experience of being in sync with others is most pronounced, and this is the reason that participatory music is so valuable in societies throughout the world. It is also why politicians, fascists, and nationalists use this same potential. (44)

Csiksentmihalyi is also clear on this, saying of musical gatherings that

> There are few other occasions at which large numbers of people witness the same event together, think and feel the same things, and process the same information. Such joint participation produces in an audience the condition Emile Durkheim called 'collective effervescence,'[50] or the sense that one belongs to a group with a concrete, real existence. (1990: 110)

Music here was the means of uniting the thousands of participants. The *Inthakhin* pillar still stood at the center, drawing people in from all over the north as they came to feel and participate in a distinctive northern pride and identity. The lyrics also celebrate this unity.

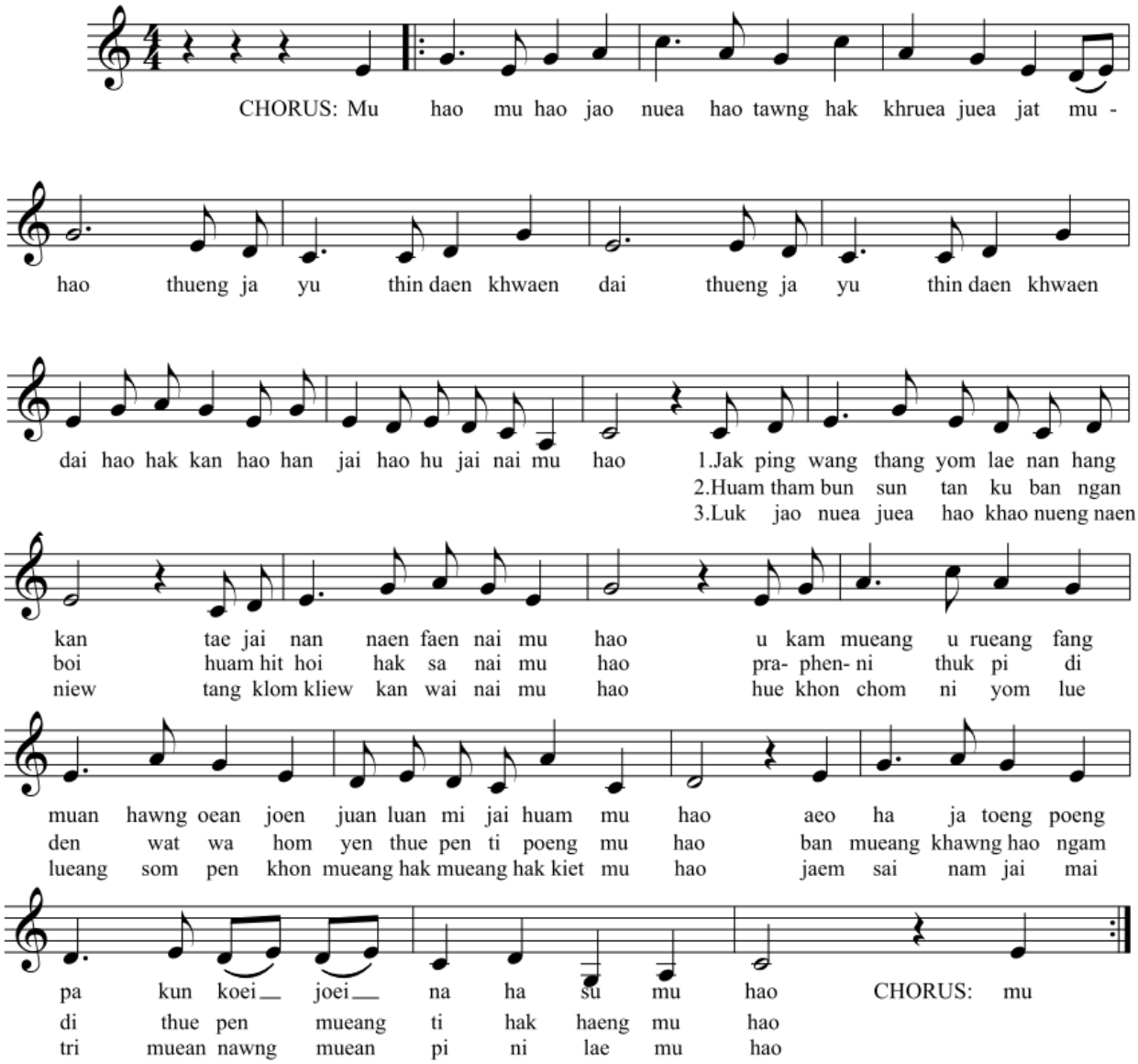


Figure 7: Western notation rendering of "*Mu Hao Jao Nuea*" with lyrics.[51]

Translation:

We Northerners all love our lineage.
No matter which territory/province we live in,
we all love each other.
We sympathize, we know each other's hearts.

From the Ping to the Yom to the Nan and Wang rivers, far apart as they may be,
Our hearts are firm amongst each other.
We speak khammueang [northern dialect] *and enjoy it*
We call out, inviting all to come together
We seek each other out, we converse, we rely, and we know each other.

We gather to make merit, pay respects, have festivals.
Together we preserve our customs and traditions.
Our traditions are excellent, the cool and shaded temples offer refuge.
Our land is beautiful, highly regarded, and beloved.

People of the north eat steamed sticky rice.
We are all united.
Our unity is well-known all over.
We love our country and our honor
We are cheerful, generous, and friendly,
Like family. This is Mu-hao

The "*Mu hao*" or "We-self" constructed here is a heritage laced with nostalgia and glossed history. Revisiting and reclaiming a Lanna past for present purposes involves a border-drawing of a sort that parallels Rama V's "colonizing" activities of the 19th century. In this view of Lanna history, all are united, regardless of province or distance from the center of Chiang Mai. This is a retelling that ignores the documented resistance of Phrae and Nan provinces that King Tilokarat (r.1441-1487) forcibly wrested from an ambiguous and dual allegiance with Ayutthaya after a 25-year war between the two kingdoms that ended in 1474 (Sarassawadee 78). Even if, historically, northern rulers had allied with Shan states, Lan Xang, Luang Prabang, or Ayutthaya more than Lanna, now Lanna loyalists can look back and reform a unified national identity out of a pre-nationalist era.

Anderson's (1972) notion of centripetal power demands a strong and united center, and unrest or discontent on the fringes cannot be tolerated by any nationalist program. The Lanna kingdom itself collapsed when nobility no longer supported the central king after Tilokarat's successor, Phra Kaeo (1495-1525), proved to be too weak to hold together a united kingdom. The remnants of this power conception now apply in the present, where the geographic label of "Lanna" indexes a heritage discourse of unity and greatness.

The "Normenon" and the Nation

The song "*Mu Hao Jao Neua*" acts as Anderson's imaginative technology of national proportions and implications that helps to "narrate" an identity (2006: 204) across provinces of the north of Thailand. When *Khru* Tom first introduced the piece to me, he described the feeling of the song:

> Ben, this is *the* song you need to know if you are in Chiang Mai during *Songkhran* [Thai New Year]. No matter where you go in the north during that time, you will hear people singing this song all over. Everyone knows it. You need to know it, too. (Personal interview)

Here, as *Khru* Tom's thoughts show, music functions similarly to Anderson's "print capitalism," where a mass-produced and widely-distributed modern commodity effectively operates as an organizational tool which the populace can employ to establish a sense of self, history, and camaraderie by conceptualizing others engaging in the same text synchronously but in different locations (38).[52] In this vein, a revisit to Charles Seeger's famous discussion of "music space-time" can add nuance to Benedict Anderson's "simultaneity", "unisonance", or "homogenous, empty time" (24). Where Anderson postulates a "meanwhile" that casts imagined nationals in a shared, synchronic timeline, co-progressing without ever meeting (25), Seeger's notion of "music space-time" suggests a degree of simultaneity of the event, not as a single instance (phenomenon) but as an ongoing and repeated experience:

> Take for example, any musical unit…a popular dance, a folksong, a symphony…Each of the many performances this has been given can be regarded as a separate event in general space-time. But in music space-time, all these performances have been one single event, one and the same *normenon*. (244-5)[53]

If Seeger is correct in reframing an annual (or otherwise regular) performance of *Mu Hao Jao Nuea* in music space-time as a single event, then this song becomes a repeating, recurring, on-going, or seemingly *timeless* endeavor—enacted not in general or mundane time but in ongoing

musical simultaneity. Seeger's music space-time normenon is thus *both* synchronic *and* diachronic, to borrow more of his terms (1977). This is the staying power of "tradition" as identified, imagined, conceived, or employed by regionalists, nationalists, or ethnic actors. Not only is it powerfully imaginable, as *Khru* Tom surmises (everyone is doing this all over the north during the *Songkhran* holiday), but its predictability *via* music space-time imbues it with a sense of continuity. And (imagined) continuity, coupled with (imagined) community, stirs strong sentiments that are here defined in song as *Mu Hao*, or "we-self." Hence, it is easily imagined or perceived that a statement such as "we *sang* this song at new year" becomes "we *sing* this song at new year" becomes "we *have been singing* this song at new year, since time immemorial." By such means are tradition, community, and the we-self constructed.

Seeger's music space-time events, while admittedly happening in both music and general space-time, come off as a bit too clean and binary: a music event is either recognizable (and, thus, a normenon) or varied to the point of distinction (an isolated phenomenon) (1951: 244-245). Turino's "semantic snowball effect" (2000: 176) observes that each recurrence of the normenon comes with an addition of contemporary context, and listeners attach any emotional, national, familial, or other baggage to the meaning of performance and participation through conglomerate semantic indexing.[54] In the end, a northern song such as *Mu Hao Chao Nuea* can feel familiar, transcend the synchronic here-and-now through the experience of music space-time, and index the imagined community through the assurance of compound past and present experiences of said normenon.

The national, autochthonous, or ethnic implication of "Lanna" is thus experienced as superseding the immediate space while confirming the existence of an imagined other who is equally part of the (singing, dancing) Lanna *Mu Hao* "we-self" (and, Seeger's normenon

suggests, is internalized as ever-as-such). The text of the song effectively marks out geographical boundaries by naming rivers (Ping, Yom, Wang, and Nan) as well as ethnic boundaries in the use of northern *khammueang* dialect. The subjects and dialect-showcasing lyrics speak to a united and nostalgic heritage as well as a centripetal assertion of identity in the face of Bangkok's continued administrative and cultural dominance; the participatory nature of the performance makes it worth repeating and, importantly for this culture, fun (a topic I address in chapter four).

Simon Frith describes participatory music as "that aesthetic process through which we discover ourselves by forging our relations to others" (118). In both *"Long Mae Ping"* and "*Mu Hao Jao Nuea",* the bordered *Mu Hao* collective is presented, experienced, confirmed, and projected from the Lanna center (Chiang Mai) to the rest of the north, confirming the continued power and pull of the *Sao Inthakhin* pillar and allowing for an imagined we-self united through history, movement, and song. This model works well to bind a community, but to do so requires participation; it requires participants to act according to the rules of engagement and buy into the message of unisonance and social synchrony. For those engaged already, this is not a tough sell. Social synchrony felt in the flow state is its own reward, socially and psychologically (Turino 2008; Csikszentmihalyi 1990). But there are occasions where those within the delimited we-self refuse to participate, where the rules encouraging engaged participation are flouted. In such instances, the we-self defined and experienced by "social synchrony" or "tuning in" (Schutz 1951) is instead challenged and fractured by a distancing (or perhaps a "tuning out") next. In fact, this chapter on Lanna identity can be read from a bird's eye view as a breakdown of a larger national drive for Thai unity. And a closer look at the mosaic could further reveal individuals and rogues. The we-self is thus fragile, and engaged participation temporarily obscures critical reflection upon the logic and persuasiveness of the group. Engaged participation temporarily

overpowers the sense of self and reflexivity, and the feeling of inclusion and unity pervades in that instant of timelessness and self-less-ness (Csikszentmihalyi 71). Such non-rational participation is necessary for group perception of inclusion, as critical reflection has the potentional to challenge the inclusive conglomerate. While the emotional excitement of musical mass participation is a convincing presentation of the we-self, to examine it is to move from euphoric, emotional participation (flow) to rational, critical deconstruction. And this is the state where the powerful-yet-fragile we-self can disintegrate. The next chapter examines such internal fractures by looking at a case of indigenous identity: Karen music in Thailand.

CHAPTER 3. Social Synchrony and Syncopation: Ethnic Music, Activism, Tradition, and Participation Among the Karen in Northern Thailand

Introduction

Turino's participatory music works well to frame the engagement of audiences with Lanna music, identity, and history by achieving a state he terms "social synchrony" (2008:42), whereby listeners are encouraged to "groove" (Keil & Feld 2005), or "tune in" (Schutz 1964)to the musical state of flow. But, to continue the metaphor, what about disrupted and dammed streams, protruding rocks and rapids, the salmon going against the current? Flow is inviting, compelling, and at times compulsory, but there are those that fight it or reject it outright. Participation is a celebrated goal, but it is not without its holdouts and challengers. This chapter examines some of the resistance and roadblocks to participation in ethnic music by looking at the Karen of northern Thailand and the various influences that have operated to separate Karen from engagement with or acknowledgement of traditional Karen practice. I illustrate two clear influences in this history—Thai assimilation programs and Protestant (primarily Baptist) Christianity—both of which have been framed by Karen actors as inserting conflicts between tradition and modernity. As activists and musicians attempt to reframe and renew Karen tradition, they find that their goal of participation and social synchrony is at times met by refusal, or a distancing from the flow experience, from within their own ethnic circles.

This chapter examines varying means of ethnic presentation and tells some of the story of the Karen in Thailand, first through assorted museum experiences and secondly through musical works. The three museum exhibits offer examples of official Thai narratives, interactive tourist sites, and activist-driven claims of agency. The third museum exhibit introduces Karen artist-activist-educator-musician "Chi" Suwichan Phattanaphraiwan,[55] who, in addition to producing

several albums of neo-traditional Karen music, has also written two publications on Karen music and instruments. He has situated himself as the primary spokesperson for the Karen in Thailand, and as such finds himself at the crossroads and in the crosshairs of academic activism, religious dogmatism, and ethnic revisionism. His employment of music to speak to, about, and for the Karen people in Thailand highlights some of the politics and the problems of participation that Turino does not address. In Chi's hands, music becomes a means for participating in the deconstruction of Thai narratives about the Karen, a flashpoint for religious arguments that divide Karen communities and challenge ethnic tradition, and a topic of discussion that produces abstract notions of identity even in the rejection of or the refusal to partake in the music. Here, participatory music *can* produce social synchrony; however, the refusal to participate is also potentially formative of ethnic identity. A final ethnographic survey of audience members shows that, while flow states might be more social in their felt production of communal identity, the rejection of certain brands of "Karen music" is an additional opportunity to negotiate Karen identity amidst an encroaching state and an ethnic group spreading across the world as an increasingly diasporic people.

Presenting the Karen: Three Exhibits

Tribal Museum, Chiang Mai (A Thai Government Perspective)

A few kilometers from the north of the moat surrounding the old walled city of Chiang Mai, beyond Chang Phueak Gate, stands the refurbished Northern Ethnicity Learning Center (formerly known as the Tribal Museum). The three-story museum features multiple displays of costume, artifacts, clothed manikins, videos of festivals and celebrations, model homes, a gift shop, and a top floor dedicated to the royal family and their work to uplift the people of the mountains.[56] Modernity and advancement operate as subtexts even as the displays emphasize

centuries-old traditional livelihoods.

The museum is affiliated with the Thai government and had connections to Chiang Mai University at the inception of the Tribal Research Institute (later, Tribal Research Center) in the early 1960s. Funded by the Department of Public Welfare and created in the midst of cold war policies with Thailand as an anti-communist Southeast Asian ally of the west, the research institute's project had three phases. Initially, its funding and research was motivated by a charge to both root out communist sympathizers and harborers (in a compromise with academic and applied anthropological researchers) and also to address the production and trade of opium. Later, the ethnic groups' integration into the nation was stressed (language, religion, education, media, and infrastructure sought to connect remote villages to the center via James Scott's "distance-destroying technologies" [2009: 45]). Finally, opium enforcement shifted toward more aggressive involvement in forestry management on the part of Thai government, and opium fields were destroyed and replaced with government-sponsored agricultural development initiatives (Kwanchewan 371-74). Thus, the catalyst of central Thai attention[57] paid to northern non-Thai ethnic groups was from the beginning paired with the need to deal with the so-labeled "hill tribe problem" (375). The diverse highland ethnic groups were in some ways recognized as distinct (dress, language) yet also monolithically lumped together as "other," suspect, backward, dangerous, and in need of development. These ideas are nicely summarized in the orientation video at the museum, which vacillates between romantic praise of traditional ceremony (distilling culture to the most observable and tangible fabrics and festivals), scorn of swidden agriculture, and an envisioned modernity that retains the festivals while extinguishing the fires. It also breaks each group into its own ethnic category, by means of costume and festivities, before again glossing all as *hill tribe* other:

Hill tribes live harmoniously with nature. Whether in the heat of summer, or the overcast humid days of the rainy season, or the chill of winter, they go about their work in the fields, or tending livestock, cooking, or caring for their families. The men spend their leisure time hunting while women weave and sew at home. It is a simple life that has continued unchanged for centuries…

The Hmong are a people with an independent spirit, who believe they were once an independent race with their own, vast lands. They are very proud of their lineage… December through January is the Hmong New Year festival. It is a cheerful time of the year when the young Hmong adorn their exquisite traditional attire, heavily decorated with beads and silver ornaments…

The Lisu New Year festival coincides with the Chinese New Year. On that day, they wear their most beautiful costumes and dance in a group, accompanied by the music of the stringed instrument, flute, *keng*[58], oboe, and reed mouth organ…

The Lahu tribe is divided into many subgroups… [they] lead a simple life without excessive ambition or extravagance. The Lahu celebrate their new year in February…

The Akha have a very distinct mode of dress. Akha women wear an elaborate black blouse embroidered with a colorful design and a black pleated skirt, which falls above the knees… Their well-known swinging ceremony has become an annual event that has become a very unique characteristic of the tribe…

…Both the *Sgaw* and the *Pwo* Karen lead a peaceful life following simple rites and rituals. The Karen are skillful rice farmers who grow rice on terraced fields. Ecologically, this is a very effective method, as this prevents soil erosion and landslides. They also rotate crops, which keeps the soil fertile…

In older years, the natural hill tribe way of life caused several problems relating to deforestation and opium cultivation, *et cetera*.[59] However, the Thai government realized the problems and set up programs to help the hill tribes change their lifestyle. Initiated by his majesty the king [Rama IX, Bhumibol Adulyadej] over 40 years ago, these programs have set forth guidelines for resolving the problems of the hill tribes. His majesty worked tirelessly to establish royal projects to tackle the problems of the hill tribe people. Now these people have learned how to grow other crops instead of opium. They have learned a new, more beneficial way of life. The villages of the mountain tribes are no longer too remote to visit. Modern road infrastructure, packaged trips, and a wide range of visitor facilities in every province of the north and much of Thailand, allow for fast and convenient travel into the colorful realm of the hill tribes. Visiting these distinctive cultures, experiencing the friendship and hospitality of the hill tribe people, is an experience of a lifetime.[60]

The emphasis and linking of "hill tribe" to "problems" is a noted theme in research carried out by affiliates of the Tribal Research Institute/Center (Kwanchewan 361, 377).[61] The communist threat of the 60s gave way to the opium threat of the 70s, and the late 80s in turn made way for Royal Thai Forestry concerns over the indigenous rights to live or forage in (newly declared) national forested areas in such places as *Thung Yai Naresuan* National Park (Buergin 51) and *Kaeng Krachan* National Park (Suwichan 2014; Thai PBS). At every step, the "hill tribes" persisted as "problems" to be dealt with, with emphasis on the non-Thainess of their ways, beliefs, cultures, and practices. This enabled a larger ethnic gloss, a categorization of Thai and non-Thai that ignored the individual distinctions between (as well as among) each "tribe." Pinkaew Laungaramsri argues that the overall "problems" attached to the general category of "hill tribe" laid equal blame on each ethnic group for the destruction of Thai national forests, ignoring a longer history of the Karen as less destructive than some of their higher-elevation fellow 'hill tribes' that actually did engage in swidden agricultural practices (21).

Aside from agricultural practice, assumed or actual, the discourse of "hill tribe" came from and continues notions of civilized/primitive dichotomies. Pinkaew notes that *chao khao* (mountain person, or hill tribe) replaced an earlier term for highland dwellers with different customs, *khon pa* (forest people), but both index an assumed imagery of dirty, uneducated, poor, and unassimilated people groups in need of civilization.[62] In addition to this, the label *Chao Khao* has a double meaning, in that *Khao*, with no alteration of spelling or tone, can mean either "them" or "mountain."[63] Thus, *Chao Khao* ("mountain people" *and/or* "those people") is the opposite of *Chao Rao* (our people) (Pinkaew 31),[64] and the official aim of various development projects have been assimilationist in nature, such as the national-integration-and-local-development-through-Buddhist-conversion aims of the *Thammacarik* Project starting in 1964

(Hayami 1996: 336). The vision of the Northern Ethnicity Learning Center (Tribal Museum) is stated clearly on the front page of their pamphlet: “Bring Tribal People Toward Advancement” (1). This museum unsurprisingly broadcasts this dual goal of state-initiated research and uplift—the long arm of the government is reaching out to rural communities to bring them toward advancement. Here, multiculturalism is recognized, sanctioned by Thai authority, and staged as exhibition. Their “advancements” (away from opium and swiddening and into wetland rice cultivation and rotational farming) is evidence of their assimilation. In these narratives, cultural practice can be benign and celebrated as long as it does not threaten state property or narratives. Thus, “hill tribe” dress, dance, and spirit ceremonies are more or less tolerable, even marketable, while illegal activities—practicing agriculture or foraging in state conservation lands, clearing trees off of hillsides, or not having a permanent residence—are, according to state narratives, in need of “advancement.”

Kwanchewan suggests that the Tribal Research Institution may possibly have served more the interests of foreign anthropologists and even tourists than it affected government policy, a work that shifted to local NGOs in the decade before its closing (378). The museum today still caters to tourists, but it also carries a heavy presence of the stagnant, official narrative on development and civilization of the “hill tribes” (while celebrating the benign aspects of their cultures—namely, their colorful dress and customs). How might a local, grass roots, ethno-eco living museum operate differently?

Figure 8: Guidebook published by Tourism Authority of Thailand. While an adjacent picture of Karen women included a caption praising them for their eco-friendly agricultural practices, this page shows *Karen* youth under the generalized "hill tribe" label, claiming "they can bring great changes to their hometown by *giving up opium cultivation* and resorting to other kinds of plants offered by Royal Project" (2002: 24-25, emphasis mine).

Ban Tong Luang, Mae Rim (A Local Perspective)

I am waiting for Chair in front of the entrance to Mae Sa Elephant Camp. I first met Chair in 2008 when he was in high school. He would come over to our house in Thi Wa Klo village for "guitar lessons," but, really, he knew more about electric guitar techniques than I did. He was self-educated (learned by watching *youtube* videos on school computers), very

inquisitive, and, quite frankly, brilliant. His was a typical Karen story for the area: father died at a young age, mother was poor and moved from the mountain village to the big-ish city of Ban Mai (population 8,500) to send him to school, and he in turn would run off to an even bigger city. Ban Mai, in Mae Tuen sub-district, was the regional center of modern developments—there was a market twice a week, it was the first village in the sub-district (*tambon*) to have an ATM (installed in 2010), and it housed the health center as well the only high school serving both Mae Tuen and neighboring Monjong sub-district. All kids from the surrounding hill villages had to go down there, many as boarding students, if they wanted to complete their compulsory education. Chair did graduate, and also converted to Christianity at the end of his senior year, after which he received a scholarship to attend university while working for YWAM (Youth with a Mission, an international, non-denominational, evangelical missions network) in Bangkok.[65]

While his trajectory from mountain to city is fairly common, Chair is atypical in that he did not try to hide his Karen identity once he moved to Bangkok. While others regularly and legally changed their names to ones "more auspicious" or "more meaningful [to Thais]" (Yosthana [formerly Gae-dii], personal interview), Chair retained his for the explicit purpose of letting people know of his background. Additionally, after moving back to Chiang Mai upon graduation, he chose a profession that would allow him to celebrate his ethnic heritage: mahout.

The Karen have long been known for their abilities in capturing and taming elephants for work (especially teak logging in Burma and Thailand before the forestry department banned it in 1989),[66] and most working mahouts today (mostly for tourism) in the northern provinces of Thailand are Karen (Schliesinger 71-74). Chair spends half of his time caring for retired elephants and the other half working as a Karen representative at Ban Tong Luang[67] Eco-Agricultural Hill Tribes Village.

Ban Tong Luang is a model village that showcases seven different "hill tribes" (Karen, Lahu, Palong, Hmong, Kayaw, Akha, and Mien) in an "interactive" environment. Tourists purchase tickets in Chiang Mai city and are driven out to the premises (45 minutes from town), where they walk through the grounds guided by signs with labels consisting of minimal information on the "tribe" they are looking at. These signs rely on the same benign and acceptable cultural displays as the Tribal Museum—ethnic costume is the defining "tribal" characteristic (Larsen 42), so this is the convenient classification system offered to tourists.

Figure 9: Ban Tong Luang sign for the Sgaw Karen display (while the sign's creator translates the Thai *Karieng Skaw* to English "Sgaw Karen" and "Skaw Karen," the self-referential term by which they Karen refer to themselves, *pgak'nyaw*, is included in Thai in parentheses but not rendered in English anywhere).

In addition to signage, there is also a pamphlet provided in Thai and English, which adds in some information on the origins of each group. The author's sources and English translations are somewhat questionable: the Hmong, for example, are described as leaving China "to get out

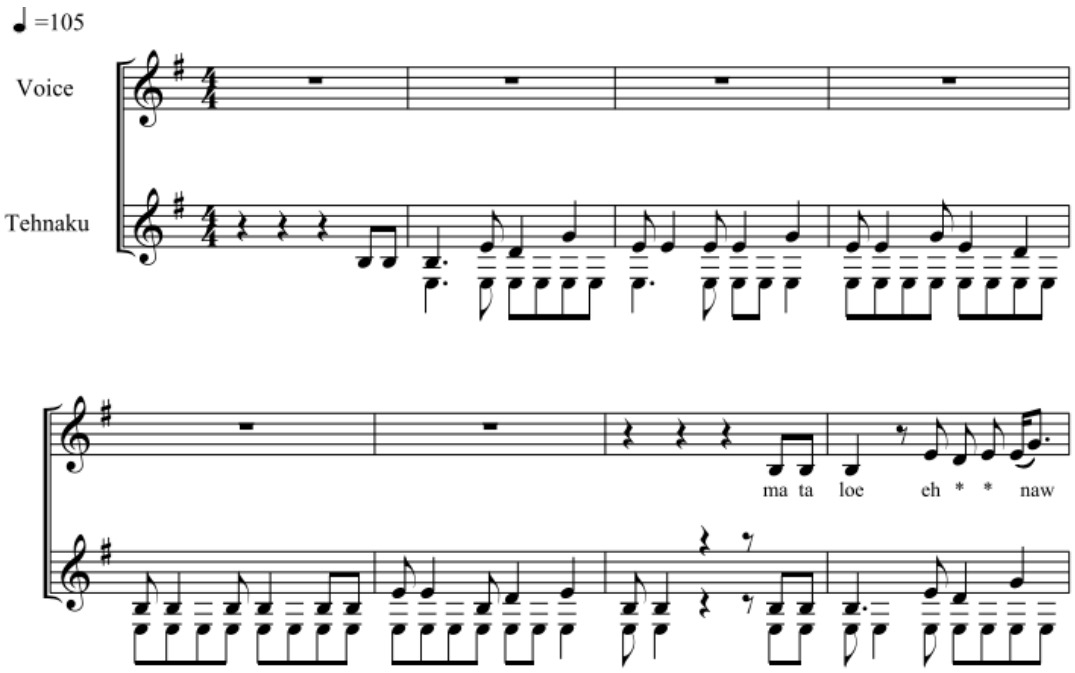
of the cold," while the Karen are portrayed as refugees, migrants, and/or nomads fleeing from Burma with no clear dates or driving factors, claiming, "Karen people originally came from Tibet before moving into China and entered to Burma around Salween River. Later, they had conflict againt [sic] he [sic] administrators of Burma, then a lot of them moved into Thailand…" This is a very different picture from the Karen-as-indigenous claims that Chi Suwichan Phattanaphraiwan makes (see next section), and it demonstrates that multiple messages of origin exist and persist, even when the people "affected" are in control of the message. Chair's boss, the founder of this exhibition, is himself Karen and was very concerned about properly displaying, preserving, and educating outsiders about these "endangered" traditions (personal interview). He invited us to sit and asked our opinion of how to make it a better experience for tourists.

Foreign visitors in *Ban Tong Luang*, for their part, are a little bit confused and unsure of what to do. Many westerners I spoke with felt awkward walking through the village,[68] unable to converse with the people, unsure of whether this was a real community or if the houses' occupants were paid employees who went to their "real" homes at night. Most interactions were limited to buying goods for sale and posing for pictures with the residents while donning traditional costumes. The exhibit with the Paduang long-neck women proves especially popular.

Museums, especially interactive ones here, though, need not necessarily be monolithic, fixed, or one-way in communication. The meanings and the activities are constantly in flux, negotiated through personal exchange (or the lack thereof). My interaction here with Chair changed the nature of the experience for me as well as the experience for a few surprised foreign visitors.

Chair took out his homemade tehnaku, the iconic Karen harp that was once, according to oral tradition, carried by all eligible Karen bachelors for the purposes of courting but which is

now rarely played (Marshall 1922; Stern and Stern 1971; Renard 1991). The instrument is carved from a log into the shape of a boat with an animal head at the front and a curved neck, fitted with a metal gas or candy container resonator, and strung with 6-10 untwisted motorcycle brake cables for strings. Thus, the physical makeup of the tehnaku itself embodies the convergence of tradition and innovation (Suwichan 2011; Fairfield 2013). The lyrics of many of famed musician Tue Pho's songs do the same. Chair is partial to Tue Pho's music as they both grew up in the vicinity of Omkoi district (though Tue Pho relocated to Doi Inthanon after getting married). Chair plucks a constant low drone with his left thumb and heterophonically accompanies the pentatonic tune [CD track 12]:



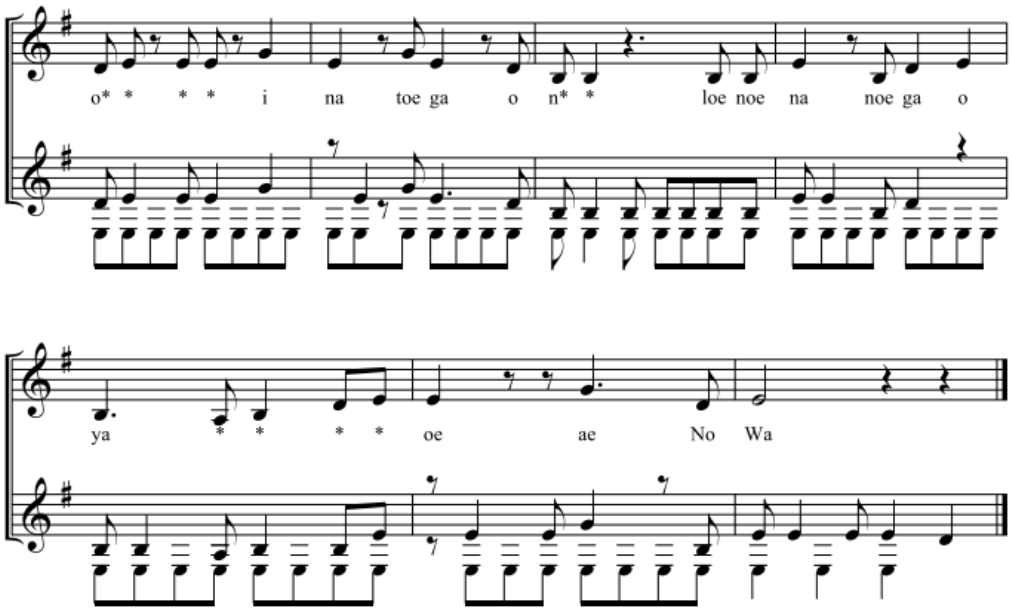


Figure 10: "Nova [Nowa]"[69] By Tue Pho, performed by Chair (author's transcription). (**inaudible)*

Chair's playing and singing starts to catch the attention of some tourists walking by. They smile and take some pictures and video as I slide out of the frame. The song finishes, and he and I discuss the meaning. The tourists do not understand our conversation and move on to the Lahu exhibit next door. Chair summarizes the song:

> *Chair: It's about girls. New Karen girls' generation. They are no longer traditional in thought. They have new ways of thinking. They don't want to wear Karen clothes. Just bikini, one piece, two piece, Sexy, ha ha…*
>
> *Tue Pho* [wrote it]. *He's conservative in style. He talks about these types of issues. But Chi's style is different. He brings in keyboards, other foreign instruments. If you want the original style, it's Tue Pho. They'd* uean [improvise] *like this, "*Le le le*"… "*Gru na, le le le*,"* [70] *these are like how white people sing phrases like "oh baby" in their songs* (Personal Interview) [CD track 12]

Other members of the Karen exhibit came over and joined in singing. Children from the Akha, Lisu, and Hmong group came over to listen. The elderly women at the Karen exhibit suddenly realized that the foreigners were musicians and sent one of the children off. The girl returned with a guitar and handed it to me. The separation between "museum display" and

audience was suddenly diffused by our impromptu jam session: guitar, tehnaku, and multiple languages confirming the musical exchange. As my wife and I were both graduate students at the University of Hawai‘i, they requested a *hula* performance. We obliged, increasing the confusion of additional tourists passing by who did not know what to make of the disruption of the museum narrative and convention. The canned exhibit script had transformed into a hodge-podge cultural and musical participation and exchange through the initiative of the museum players themselves.

Various Karen groups studied are described as having a keen interest and eventual mastery of foreigners' musical styles and/or instruments (Marshall 1922; Renard 1991; Becker 1964; Shwe 2006; Fairfield 2012). As mentioned before, Chair's guitar skills outpaced my own in many aspects, but he was not supposed to play the guitar while serving as Karen representative (instead, the tehnaku was highly "encouraged" by his supervisor). This interest in and adoption of foreign sounds coincided at first with foreign missionary contact in the 1950s,[71] some of it intentionally introduced for proselytizing and some absorbed as a matter of coincidence. Some examples from the early years of the American Baptist magazine, the *Thailand Tatler* demonstrate this musical adoption and participation:[72]

> Since the Karen students seldom go anywhere without their band instruments, these were loaded into Bill Divine's Volkswagen bus along with ten men. The bass fiddle completed the car load (Tuck 1)
>
> Those of us who have the privilege to sit about the Karen village fires during the evenings can well imagine the good teaching opportunities that will be there as these new graduates tell their stories and sing the songs they have learned at the Center [for the uplift of Hill People at Huay Kaew]. These will even include a few melancholy, forlorn, and weepy wild west songs that they have learned from missionary Dick Mann [agricultural development specialist and evangelist] (Gardener 2)
>
> Each night these folks preceded us to the villages the medical team was to visit and drew large crowds with their bass fiddle and instruments playing such numbers as 'Mexicali Rose' (Coats 1963: 6)

> An autoharp and some *Viewmaster* reels were appreciated by the attending [Karen] ladies. There are often no musical instruments in the villages (Yasuko 7)
>
> Each evening, live music of guitars, ukuleles, and *Thra* [teacher] Benny Gyaw's accordion comes over the loudspeaker as the hymns and youth songs of our teacher choir combine to draw together large numbers of the local population (Coats 1965: 6)
>
> A group consisting of two guitars, a mandolin, double bass fiddle, and piano accordion had a repertoire of such numbers as "concerto", "La Cumparsita", "Dark Eyes", "La Cucaracha", "Silent Night", "It is no Secret", and "Bernadine". Incidentally, the above instruments with the exception of one guitar and the piano accordion were all made by the Karens (Hunt 3)

The Karen in Thailand experienced an influx of the outside world in waves – Christian and governmental – and both incoming forces saw a need to develop, uplift, or otherwise assimilate and integrate the isolated villages into larger systems. Many western scholars point to Christian missionaries as catalyzing Karen ethnicity and nationalism (in Burma) through the creation of a printed script by early missionaries Adoniram Judson, Jonathan Wade, and Francis Mason, especially with the circulation of the first Karen periodical, *The Morning Star* in 1842 (see Marshall 296-301, Hovemyr 13, 97-98). Karen evangelists, united by print media and funded by western faith organizations, came to imagine a "vaster Karendom lying east of [Chiang Mai]" (*Baptist Missionary Magazine* 1868: 457). Other early evangelists predicted that, given the Christian gospel (in printed form), "A nation would be born in a day" (Peck 1850: 206). Western missionaries in Thailand in the 1950s employed similar tactics of pairing uplift with conversion among the Karen, so much so that Charles Keyes declared that the notion of a united ethnic group, or "*the* Karen…an invention of the modern world, a product of Christian missionization, colonial and post-colonial ethnographic research, and policies regarding minorities" (Keyes 2003: 210). Ethnic identity was and is, unsurprisingly, formulated in contact

and comparison rather than isolation (Barth 1969; Eriksen 2010). Christian missionaries in the 1950s and central Thai government policies coming soon after acted as a crucible. These separate entities were nicely illustrated by Chi Suwichan in a third cultural exhibition.

East-West Center's Songs of Memory *Exhibit (A Karen Academic's Perspective)*[73]

Chi Suwichan Phattanaphraiwan plays well to international audiences. His gentle style of plucking the tehnaku is pleasant and accessible, his sense of humor turns depressing issues into inside jokes in a way that builds instant rapport with audiences, and his casting of issues in the language of human rights and social justice gains him followers and sympathizers across the globe. He has presented at United Nations meetings in Switzerland and Sweden, he is regularly called upon by Thai media to represent the Karen (with appearances on Thai PBS, TV Asia, Modern 9 TV, Thai Channel 3, and others), he is sought out by the Bangkok Post, NGOs, and independent journalists (i.e., http://www.jeffsjournalism.com/indigenous-voices/, John Goldney's 2012 documentary film *Songs from the Karen Forest*, a world music tour of the US with worldbeat artist/producer Todd "Tongdee" Lavelle and northern Thai pop star Lanna Commins in 2009), and he has recently been establishing his academic presence with two book publications (*I am Tehnaku* in 2011; *Forbidden Songs of the Pgak'nyaw* in 2014).[74]

On May 12, 2012, I picked up Chi and Akha musician Aju Jupoh (see chapter five) at Honolulu airport as a representative of the East-West Center.[75] I figured that they might want some down time and a family-style welcome after a long flight, so we went to a backyard *lū'au* up at a friend's house in Alewa Heights overlooking downtown Honolulu. As expected, within 10 minutes Chi had gained a social-justice-minded audience interested in his experience and storytelling abilities. He elaborated on some stock themes I have heard him present elsewhere. 1) His name is Chi (meaning "small"), and his family and community know him as that, but the

Thai government demanded he register and receive Thai identity papers with the legal and arbitrary name "Suwichan," as per government policy. 2) His village, Muejekhi[76] (or "Frog Pond"), also had to be renamed and registered as the Thai government stepped in to manage it (Suwichan 2014). Now it is legally called *Ban Mai Phattana* ("Newly Developed Village"). 3) The Thai government wants them to be developed and assimilated and to have a product to sell for the benefit of community and nation (i.e., dance and sing, or make things) yet does not care about the individuals or the actual perpetuation of Karen culture. 4) Lastly, Chi positions himself as a savvy spokesman for Karen rights and cultural perpetuation, claiming,

> I use music as a tool. If I were to just go up to the Thai government and make angry demands for our rights as a people, they would not listen. They would probably just put me in jail![77] But if I present our case through music, or through storytelling, the Thai government might see this as an asset to them, maybe something they can use to promote themselves or use for tourism, then we have a better chance at being heard (personal interview)

There is a connection here to these methods and the message of the Tribal Museum. While the Tribal Research Institute sought ways to replace opium cultivation and slash and burn agriculture with more acceptable methods, some of the more benign or marketable aspects of "hill tribe" diversity were "worth" retaining: festivals, songs, dances. Chi is aware of this assumed harmlessness of arts and cultural display and takes advantage of it, turning it into a "tool."[78] He is also aware of his ethnic identity's clout with foreign audiences and makes use of certain tropes regarding abuse, colonization, and indigenous resistance in these presentations. John McKinnon, in examining the work of Karen activist and medicine man Joni Odochao in Chiang Mai, notes that, "it is as if the Karen have adopted an image of themselves not so much from who they are to themselves but who they are to outsiders" (64), where "the esoteric capital of ethnicity is his principal qualification" (77). Here, culture is not just a "way of life" but

something "consciously cultivated and performed" (81).

Chi's lecture and musical performances at the *Songs of Memory* exhibit on May 14, 2012, demonstrate these strategies. He opens with the story of his name: forced by the government to go by another name and live in a village renamed and relocated. This is followed by an anecdote of ancestral authority through the description and analysis of *tha*, the poetic oral tradition of the Karen that contain proverbs and histories sometimes couched in esoteric language.[79] Reflecting on a *tha* from the perspective of modernity, Chi shows how an odd legend now appears eerily prophetic.

> The Karen had a folk tale about a snake. They said, one day, a big snake will come to our village. And the big snake will swallow the people into the snake's stomach. In the stomach of the snake, it is very loud in that place. Like a cave. And it has many frogs going inside and outside the cave. And from the frog's behind, there is smoke, too. And the frog has a very loud voice. We didn't understand the meaning.
>
> But then one day, the government came, missionaries came, many things came to our community. And one day the cars come. With the road. And our young generation, the missionary or the government said, "If you want to develop yourself, you have to go to the city. To study. To change your religion. To change your culture. To speak Thai. To speak English. To change your hairstyle. To change your costume style."
>
> …That's the reality in my community. And when they saw the road, the road began to get bigger, bigger, bigger. Like the snake. In the beginning, it was very small. But it's bigger, bigger, bigger. And, finally, it swallowed, even me. That snake swallowed me to a city too.
>
> So, in the city, when you see the city, they have higher buildings, like a cave. And we have cars, like frogs. And the car has a loud noise, and has smoke, too! The old car.[80] And they said, the young generation cannot be called back to the community, because it is very loud in the stomach of the snake. Their ears are blown. The father calls, they cannot hear. The mother calls, they cannot hear. Friends call, they cannot hear. That situation has become true in this moment.

This *tha* about the snake and the frog pairs easily with another *tha* about a young girl, *Naw Cha Tru*. Chi draws upon this Karen legend in each of his publications. In *I am Tehnaku*

(2011), the song about *Naw Cha Tru* is sung to a stubborn girl who refuses to participate in the annual village wrist-tying ceremony.[81] In the story, the heroic orphan sings the 7-syllable *tha* lines to the sleeping maiden on his newly invented tehnaku to wake her from her slumber and get her to do her duty to her family, village, and society (Suwichan 2011: 33-34). The lyrics are first listed as follows:

Kru na kru na	*Kru na kru na*
Khu law sè loe thi chà pu	Tend to the fields amidst the stream,
Khu law wà loe thi chà pu	Tend to the fields amidst the forest;
Sè de kè ke te-nà-ku	The curved wood makes a tehnaku,
Wà de kè ke te-nà-ku	The curved bamboo makes a tehnaku;
De loe doe loe blaw nà hu	Play it in the field, you can hear it in the village,
De loe blaw loe doe nà hu	Play it in the village, you can hear it in the fields;
Nàw tòe ka sá tòe nà hu	But one sleeping girl does not hear it,
Mi sòe pe à mò baw hu	Her mother must shake her to wake her so she can listen.

(Suwichan 2011: 33-34; trans. Fairfield 2015).

Later in the same text, Chi adds in a new verse and slightly alters his translation, [82] showing that the *tha* are never stagnant but always layered with new meanings in their repetition.

Naw Chà Tru, Naw Chà Tru,
Has left our village for the city;
The rice pounding mortar has gone silent,
The rooster does not crow.

Tend to the gardens amidst the forest,
Tend to the rice fields at the headwaters;
If you see curved bamboo, make a tehnaku,
If you see curved wood, make a tehnaku.

Play it at home, it is heard in the fields,
Play it in the fields, it is heard in the village;
Naw Chà Tru says she does not hear it,
She is asleep; wake her up already! (Chi Suwichan 2011: 83; trans. Fairfield 2015)

In the musical performance of this text, the song here features an upbeat swing with a

major pentatonic melody accompanied by the tehnaku's ostinato bass and heterophonic interaction with the vocals. [CD Track 10].

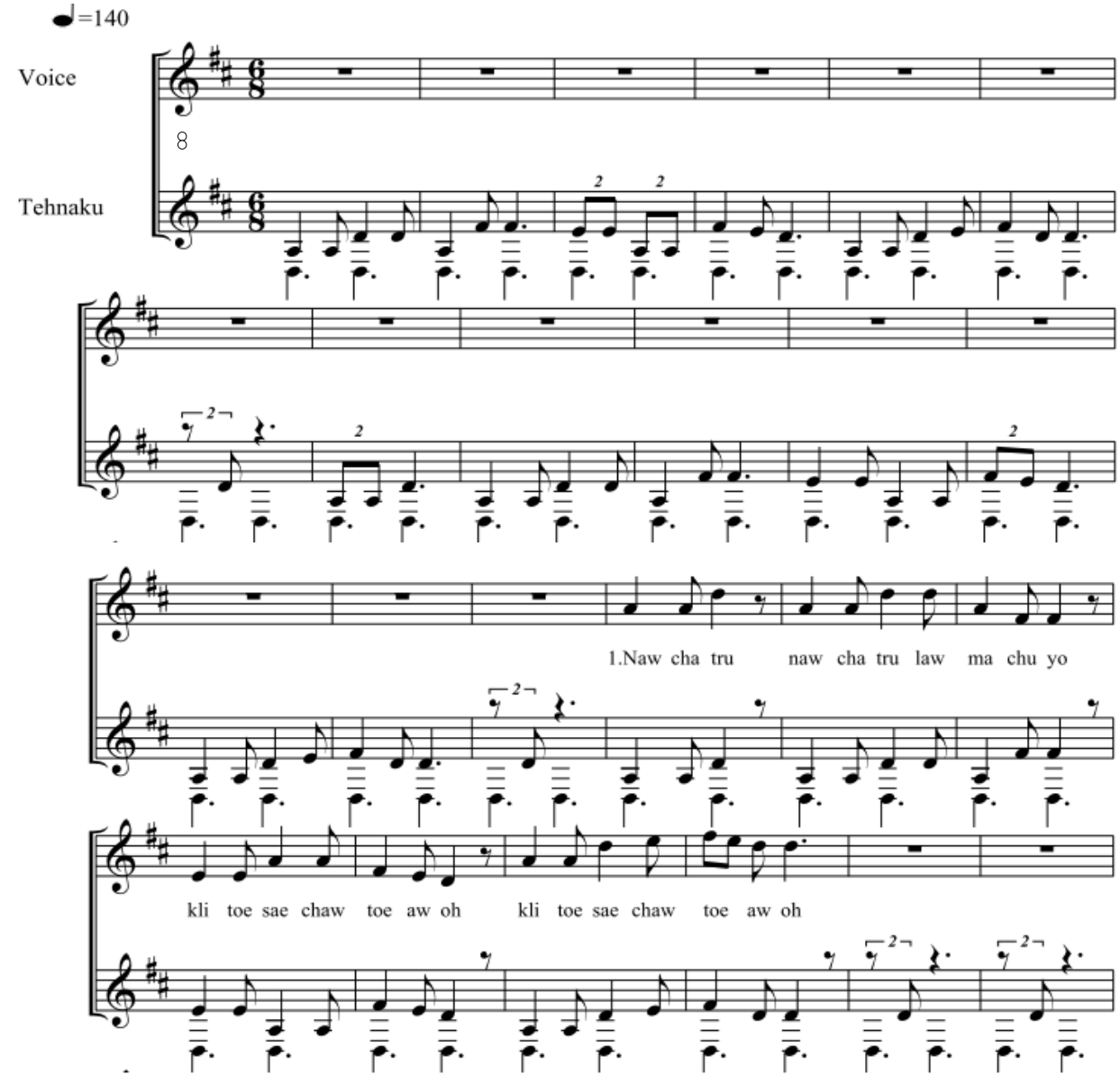


Figure 11: Transcription of verse 1 of *Naw Cha Tru*[83]

The song *Naw Cha Tru* also illustrates that various push and pull factors were affecting Karen communities and drawing young people away. These forces of modernity, whether in the form of Western/Christian or Thai/Buddhist development, exist both as part of urban opportunity

to be grasped via outward migration and as incoming development projects bringing modern comforts to the village itself. In both areas, opportunities for Karen cultural perpetuation were reportedly diminished. Anecdotes in the *Thailand Tatler* give a sense of the extras that came with conversion. Missionaries Bob and Pat Coats described the developments in Chi's hometown of Muejekhi, saying, "we were all impressed with what Christ and devoted Christians can do for the Karen…well-ordered streets, fences, general cleanliness, a rich variety of fruits and vegetables, lovely church clinic, and plans for a new school building" (1960: 4). Carl Capen similarly noted about Muejekhi that "unlike most Karen villages, each house had a fence and the yards were quite clean. Apparently the gospel had brought about an outer as well as an inner transformation" (Capen 1). These changes were solidified through the work of Karen evangelists trained at the Huay Kaew Center for the Uplift of Hill People in Chiang Mai.

As the world opened up, Hayami argues, Karen "traditional practices began to seem insufficient, cumbersome, and irrelevant for some villages" (2004: 66), and roads brought in new products (as well as a need to join the cash economy) and also became venues for sending kids away for better opportunities (75-77). Chi describes his higher education in his bio in both books, saying that an elder at the church encouraged him to go and study to be an electrician through a state quota system. Chi's village at the time did not even have electricity, and he himself had never seen a plug or an outlet; consequently, he was the first student in school history to short circuit the system (Suwichan 2011: 105; 2014: 95).

Naw Cha Tru speaks of one of these lost Karen children who have gone away to the city and can no longer hear the birds, the forest, or the families they left behind. Chi brings up the story again in *Forbidden Songs* (Suwichan 2014):

> There is a Karen story about a girl, *Naw Cha Tru,* who disappeared into the big

> city. Everything in Karen society changed. The daily pounding of rice was not heard; even the chicken stopped crowing. The wholeness of the earth's resources—earth, water, forest—was also gone. But there is still hope. We must try to call *Naw Cha Tru* home with the sound of the *tehnaku*. We can use Karen culture to get *Naw Cha Tru* to awake from her subconscious state and bring life to our community again (37)[84]

Chi thus presents himself as back home, steeped in tradition, calling out to those who have wandered off.[85] Chi's foreign, Western, highly educated audience at the East-West Center exhibit responded with sympathetic head shaking at his people's plight. The long-held Karen narratives that paint them as a people oppressed, subjugated, devalued, and, in some legends, stripped of a once-great kingdom by the major civilizations encroaching upon them (Renard 1980: 7; Hovemyr 5-6; Hayami 2004: 26-27; Marshall 22; Shwe 2) struck a nerve with this audience in Hawai'i. Members of the audience drew upon these comparisons in the question and answer portion of Chi's talk.

> *Audience Member*: The song that you sang, the melody of it, to me it sounded more familiar to a western ear than many of the other music in the area. It sounded almost like what we call country music, which is very influenced by church hymns. Even Hawaiian music, too. I'm wondering because I know you were mentioning the church and Christianity in your community. Do you think that influenced the sound? And are there older songs that sound different?
>
> *Chi*: Yes, the melody, the beginning part is from traditional, but the chorus part I composed. And I cannot deny that I didn't get some influence from the church. I try to avoid, but of course, in reality, I get influenced a lot. Because in my head, in my heart, in my blood, there is a lot of poison inside of me from the outside. I try to take it out, but some poison you cannot take out.

Here, the externally-imposed developments, and church specifically, are labeled as "poison" to be removed from tradition. Yet, paradoxically or not, in the very next breath Chi notes a need to "develop" his music by modernizing and updating it for the upcoming generation. Is it not "poison" if it comes from internal initiative? Or is Chi merely catering to his audience?

> I try to compose the song that can be played with other instruments in the world. I

> did it like that because now, our young generation doesn't want to play this musical instrument, saying it can play only traditional music, traditional song…I say no, you can raise it, you can develop it to play with other people. So that's why my melody, I try to open space for other [Western] musical instruments…I can play reggae, I can play blues, I can play country, like you said. I try to practice to play other styles, but of course, the root of it still keeps the traditional. Because I think the culture can have a paradigm shift, a movement.

Thus, the audience affects how Chi talks about his music. He adjusts his methods to increase participation and to encourage communal consent as to the narrative presented. The goal is social synchrony, a state of flow where all are on board. This goal also affects how and why he composes music (as well as how it gets labeled). Chi is aware of this, and his first two books address his ethnic-musical proposals as well as the audiences' response (synchrony and distancing) to them. He argues for ethnic unity and progress and presents these arguments with music as his tool. Participation in this endeavor would confirm his agenda.

Putting Music into Print

Acknowledging the long-standing importance of *Tha* as a marker of Karen identity via oral tradition (5-6), Anders Hovemyr (1989) argues that the missionaries' development of Karen literate tradition in Burma catalyzed nationalistic imaginings of a greater community of Karen who would unite via print communication methods and reestablish a long lost territorial kingdom that they believed once stretched from the Mekhong to the Salween (88-100; See also Shwe 1-3, 63). Chi echoes some of these ideas wherein publication equals power and recognition. He opens *Forbidden Songs of the Pgak'nyaw* (2014) with a recollection of a conversation he has with Thai historian Sujit Wongthet:

> Professor Sujit Wongthet, a Thai historian, once told me, "The victors of wars, or the powerful, will record their history in books, while the losers, or the powerless, usually record their histories in songs, tales, and legends, as well as through the naming of people and places" (2014: 6)

Chi's entry into the world of academic publication, then, is a means of tapping into this recognized power source that has long been lacking a Karen voice, a feat he accomplishes by revisiting Karen oral tradition academically. His publications offer him a chance to speak for, about, and to the Karen with an authority not historically ascribed to *tha* (Fairfield 2013), and we collaborated to translate both of his books into English as a means of elevating the reach and authority of the texts.[86] Both publications make music a central issue. His first publication, *I am Tehnaku*, shows the process of engagement with the outside world in action while his second, *Forbidden Songs*, presents a more reflective and insular account of audience reception of his attempts at cultural revival.

I am Tehnaku (2011)

Chi's publication about the tehnaku, the iconic Karen harp once carried by all young bachelors and now making a comeback after being nearly declared extinct (Marshall 139-141; Renard 1991), is the first academic publication on Karen music by a Karen scholar and musical practitioner in Thailand.

In the preface, Chi briefly alludes to some of the deeper contextual issues surrounding the harp with his autobiography. It is true that not many play the harp these days, and part of his book (63-84) serves as an instruction manual for learning two important songs, *Naw Cha Tru* and *Naw Doe Jaw* (a courting song sung at funerals), but the *need* for a revival of the tehnaku is first explained from the onset. In his telling, the dual issues of modernity (from Thai and western society entering a once-isolated village) and religious suspicion (from the Baptist authorities) eventually forced his hand. While the former spurs the need for revival, the latter receives some of the blame for its decline. Chi writes,

The first [tehnaku] performance in church by my father 30 years ago was attacked and

> criticized for being inappropriate by the Pgak'nyaw[87] Christian leadership. After that, the tehnaku had no opportunity to come near the space of the church again whatsoever…until I stubbornly brought her in again to play, even though my dad warned me of the risk that could result…(*v*)
>
> …the state introduced a policy to evict my people from the forests. My fellow Pgak'nyaw, who mostly lived in forested areas since before they were officially declared forest reserves, were born in those woods. The forest was everything for our lives…we used and preserved it in a balanced way, ensuring its continued sustainability. But the government did not see it that way… It was therefore the duty of headwater tribes and forest dwellers together with those who understood first-hand that people and forests could live symbiotically together to stand up and tell our story to those who did not understand or believe…to dispel this concept of a perceived necessary eviction of the original inhabitants from their existing communities over which a forestry area has been declared. I participated in the protests by using art, music, and songs to instill understanding among the public in the ways of my people (*vi*)

The issues described in this preface by the author, though not mentioned again in the text, set the stage for what might otherwise be read as a cute story, a harmless folk tale, or a benign musical description. This, again, shows Chi's masterful use of aspects of tradition celebrated by Thai authorities to address deeper problems via metaphor and story.

After two lead articles by Sujit Wongthet and Bringkhop Woraurai (professor of music at Payap University),[88] the first half of Chi's narrative (17-48) relays a folk tale on the origin of the tehnaku as told by a father to his son (the work is autobiographical, so it is Chi and his father throughout as the scene transitions from the legendary setting to the present context around the family hearth). Basically, the hero, an unconsidered and uncivilized orphan, neglected and independent,[89] creates a musical instrument that becomes the only means of waking the stubborn daughter of a powerful lord. The lord must reluctantly award the orphan half of his land and his daughter in marriage in return for the orphan's service, but the orphan opts for life in the mountain forests, living peacefully among nature and his community (and with his new wife).

The opening folktale helps to establish the orphan character as non-threatening, clever,

and trustworthy. The narrative pulls back from the legend and into the Karen home in the forest, where the boy and his father discuss the instrument by firelight. Here, Chi subtly introduces his message of the Karen as forest preservers rather than forest destroyers (Pinkaew 37) while merely discussing the process of making a tehnaku. In the story, Chi returns home and tells his father he intends to construct his own instrument. To do so, he plans on cutting down a few trees. His father admonishes him:

> "Huh?!? You can't just go cutting down trees at random! There are rules when it comes to making a tehnaku…The Pgak'nyaw who played the tehnaku in the past passed on the belief that, in any given year, you cannot cut down more than three trees for the purpose of making the instrument…"
>
> "If one were to exceed three trees, what would happen?" I asked next.
>
> "The elders tell us that a clever person is one who practices sustainable living. If we don't consume our resources efficiently, they will be used up quickly. In the past, the people who played the tehnaku believed that if within one year they cut down more than three trees to make a tehnaku, their hands would become barren, causing the sound of the tehnaku to be bad. When played, it would cause quarreling in the community. When cutting down a tree, you must cut the tree at least as high as your knee, too, in order that the knot can sprout again…If you cut the tree lower than your knee, it will cause the tree to die permanently so that it cannot sprout new buds. If the trees that we use for our needs are dead, it means that we can make use of it only once. That would mean that we have become a people who are not clever and do not consume our natural resources sustainably. We must consider our long-term consumption always... if you can find a tree that has died or dried out naturally, it will have the best sound." (98-100)

Karen oral tradition set in type attains an authoritative, confrontational, and environmental voice under Chi's command (Fairfield 2013). It not only corrects the boy's improper behavior but also demonstrates compatibility between forest conservation and Karen traditional practice. This discussion of musical instruments and their construction thus speaks implicitly to Chi's preface in the book, showing the Royal Thai Forestry skeptics that "people and forests could live symbiotically together" (*vi*).[90] Thus, it is not just the performance of music

that Chi uses as a tool but the conversations and procedures surrounding music making (or instrument making) that are instructive.

While Chi's dialogue above speaks to the external contemporary issue of responding to Thai government authorities that once included the Karen in the overarching label of forest-destroying "hill tribe," a "problem" for the state to correct (Kwanchewan 361), Chi also addresses the complaints leveraged at his music apparently coming from within his own community (in other words, the social syncopation disturbing participation in the message). In a chapter titled, "Taking Father's Knowledge to the Next Level," the boy has exhausted his father's repertoire of styles and asks what else he can teach the boy. The father sums up three levels of Karen-ness as nature, adoption/adaption, and outreach/service:

> At the first level: we are born with some natural limitations. For example, our place of birth, our family, our community, and our culture. These things determined that we would be people who lived on the mountain. Being Pgak'nyaw, we have skills in agriculture. We are this way by nature. This is our way of life, which we practice and learn normally.
>
> The second step: we must also seek out knowledge from other people, other sources. This is your lesson, your course, your model and foundation for adapting and increasing your skills and potential for maintaining our people's way of life, so that we are sustained in ways appropriate for the society and the culture in which we live.
>
> The third step: we must raise the level of knowledge that we have and take it to the next level by innovating, serving others in this generation's society with understanding, with honor, and with pride in our individuality. (88)

In this conversation, Chi's father is exhorting him to go out and innovate through incorporating new ideas from the outside. The act of publishing offers one level of authority (or permission), but Chi also appeals to ancestral teaching and practice, again quoting his father:

> "…we must take our natural limits and mix them with foundations of knowledge we gain from other people, other sources, as a base from which we can build and advance our people's knowledge. Music is the same. You must learn from other

> people and other sources, and certain things you must learn by yourself in order to innovate…"
>
> *In line with this aforementioned way of thinking of the Pgak'nyaw elders*, there have thus been advancements and an expanded understanding of the tehnaku, including an extension of the pitches to a full western scale with seven notes, starting with eight strings. But still, you can increase the number [of strings] to nine or more…you can add the western scale degrees FA and TI to the original pentatonic scale, achieving a full seven-note scale. (89, emphasis mine)[91]

In Chi's telling, his changes to the tehnaku (adding strings, different scales, and new pairings with contemporary world ensembles) all fit within an elder-sanctioned trajectory of development. This sort of argument must have roots in either critiques of his music as a straying from tradition or as the idea that the tehnaku had no place in modern music making among the Karen community[92]—Ronald Renard indeed claimed that "More is known of the Karen in Thailand for their expertise with the guitar, piano, and violin than is of their traditional Karen music" (1991: 2). This lack of place within Thai or modern society obviously extends beyond music and hints at a deeper cultural shame felt among some of the younger generations today. Professor Esther Dangpongpee, principal of the Siloam Bible Institute in Huay Kaew, commented on this idea amongst urban Karen families:

> We have to do something so that the Karen may know the value of our people and not see other cultures and traditions as better than ours. It's not because others came and made us lose our culture, but our people are losing our own culture. That's the biggest problem. I feel very sad about that. In this area [Huay Kaew], most of the people are Karen but their children never speak Karen anymore. When they go to school, they never use Karen. Some of the parents, they think we are a tribal people, from the mountain, so we don't speak Thai very well. So they want their children to speak Thai like real Thai, so they try to let their children speak Thai. Even at home they don't speak Karen, so that is the way to make our language and culture to be lost. This is the problem. If we do not try to do something to preserve it, the next generation will lose it. (Personal Interview)

This kind of response to Karen cultural expression, musical or otherwise, is felt at different levels for different reasons amongst Karen communities in Thailand. For this reason,

attention to audiences is a must in understanding meaning and value in music—the presenting performer is only half of the participatory story. Chi Suwichan's second book, *Forbidden Songs of the Pgak'nyaw*, recounts his experiences with diverse audiences within the Karen community as he tried to revive certain funeral *tha* and other aspects of Karen participatory cultural expression.

Forbidden Songs of the Pgak'nyaw (2014)

Central to Chi's second book is the *tha*, the seven-syllable couplet poetry containing history, legend, directions, proverbs, and other highly valued ancestral wisdom. The *tha* associated with traditional funerals is especially emphasized. Roland Mischung attests that "Until the 1980s, *hta*[93] were regarded as constituting the core of Karen cultural heritage…real Karen were those who had knowledge of *hta* and knew when and how to use them properly" (134). Schwoerer-Kohl notes that *tha* are "considered authentic utterings of the ancestors…The songs contain many kinds of Karen aphorisms that include a vast set of information encoded metaphorically" (300-301). Funeral contexts provide some of the most memorable and participatory instances of *tha* performance, wherein young singles of opposite genders would pair up, singing *tha* while circumambulating the deceased in all-night ceremonies (Stern and Stern 187; Hayami 2004: 144-146; Fink 95; Shwe 34; Suwichan 2014: 24: Chaplin 1872: 5).[94] Missionaries Bob and Pat Coates described an animist funeral scene in 1960:

> One night we were awakened by the eerie wailing and mournful singing of the non-Christians in the village [of Musikee]…We found the non-Christians marching around the body of a mother who had died three days previously. Each night from dusk until dawn this procession did not stop, nor did the wailing which was supposed to keep the evil spirits from remaining in the village. (1960: 3)

Thra Loo Shwe, in his travels throughout Thailand in the 1940s, encountered what Chi calls a *mo cho*, a recognized, trained master of Karen *tha* who is responsible for maintaining communal

knowledge via verse and encouraging participation (2014: 15). For Loo Shwe, responding to the performance of *tha* (through participation) in introductory scenes acted as a sign of cultural knowledge and identity performance. He recalls,

> If you go to a non-Christian village, they invariably address you in that way and start opening a "broad side" at you with old Karen traditional verse. Once in such a village as I entered it a couple of young Karens started speaking to me in poetry. I refused to be beaten by such uncouth (unpolished) country bumpkins at their own game. Relying on the traditional knowledge gained by me in my study of old Karen traditions and songs, I returned them in the same strain and the duel continued thus for some length of time. When at last I found the leader's face gradually lit up and a very broad grin from ear to ear. We struck up a quick friendship and as it happened to be that he was somewhat of a "poet laureate" of the locality, I was fortunate enough to gain a considerable amount of old Karen poetry as a result…(57)

Chi took on this cultural provenance aspect of participatory *tha* and attempted to revive its performance in the Christian stronghold of Muejekhi, one of the first major centers of Karen conversion in Thailand.[95] As he would find out, communities had reservations about participating in such events. The book covers "forbidden" songs that were labeled as such because they were only appropriate in the correct context: funerals. To sing them elsewhere was to challenge the spirits. Eventually, Chi sees the label as applying more broadly to all times and all instances as Baptist attitudes toward traditional animist belief became increasingly negative.

Chi opens the book with a funeral scene lasting four chapters, pointing to the participatory and potentially uniting power of Karen funeral music in its traditional setting. In his description of an elder's funeral, surrounding villages have all congregated at the center, excited young people have arrived in eager anticipation, and the antiphonal singing is about to begin. It is as if the flow has not arrived yet but its roaring rush is echoing down the canyon walls:

> When we hear the *Tha chaw toe lae*, all the young people come in droves to the singing circle to begin the ceremony of youth. The *Tha* can thus be seen as a song that invites the young people to come sing in competition, with a *mo cho* of the

> women and the *mo cho* of the men leading each team. The stage is set for the much-anticipated responsive display of the *Tha* singing. The *Tha* event starts with the couplet *thadawthaw*, which means "the *Tha* begins". Most will be *Tha* about love, harmony, and cooperation, *giving participants a sense of awareness that they are all of one community, one ethnic group, one society, and one world...* (emphasis mine)
>
> While singing the *Tha daw thaw* continuously, the young men and women try to find an opportunity to transition to *Tha naw doe jaw*, or the courting song, while the older performers try to stay with *daw thaw*, since it is not yet the appropriate time to change to the courting song. When the elders bring it back to *daw thaw*, the younger singers will try to get back to *naw doe jaw*. The elders then will come back to the original, staying there until they see it fitting to move on. When it is appropriate to change, it will be the time for *naw doe jaw* (the courtship song).
>
> Tha *naw doe jaw* is the beginning of courting songs between male and female, where poetic language or Tha is used to communicate. Sometimes they banter back and forth and tease each other, which makes for a most enjoyable atmosphere for the young male and female singers. *They say that once the youngsters reach this stage, they can carry on non-stop past the rooster's morning crow.* (Emphasis mine 23-24)

This sense of unity is another oft-cited feeling of flow, according to Csikszentmihalyi:

> "The loss of the sense of a self separate from the world around it is sometimes accompanied by a feeling of union with the environment… When a person invests all her psychic energy into an interaction…she in effect becomes part of a system of action greater than what the individual self had been before" (63, 65).

The feeling of being outside of time is also evident in this description of funeral songs: they could go all night long, lost in the participatory singing of *tha.* Funeral songs in traditional Karen society thus played an integral role in bringing community through enjoyment. This participatory event centered the Karen self amidst suffering and excitement.

Chi recalled the encouragement he received from Joni Odochao in writing *Forbidden Songs*, telling me, "We should not forget about our suffering. This is part of life, part of who we are. This is why the funeral *tha* are important" (Personal Interview). As mentioned previously, Karen narratives stressing identification with and as oppressed and suffering orphans are

numerous (Renard 2003: 5-6), and here the *tha* emphasize this idea in that they are most commonly associated with funerals and acknowledging suffering. Some of these funeral *tha*, however, were understood as having powerful connections with the spirit world. One in particular, the *tha* about *plue* (the underworld), was supposed to be used only for guiding the souls of the departed to the next life (Suwichan 2014: 19-20). This is where the title and theme of the book, *forbidden songs*, picks up another layer of relevance. It is also where the social synchrony and timeless, unified flow of participation begins to give way to confusion, rejection, fear, and distancing.

Karen *tha* could be forbidden by various authorities for many reasons and in certain contexts. While permitted, expected, and enjoyed in an animist funeral setting, their use outside permitted contexts is problematic—there is a time to participate and a time to forbid performance. Chi recounts putting on a Karen play about *Naw Mue Eh* (a legend about a young girl abducted by a snake) that included a funeral scene, where the choir practiced the funeral song on the outskirts of the village, just to be safe. Even so, an elder died shortly after they began rehearsing, and many suspected his soul was lured away to *plue* according to the song's original purpose (29).[96] These connections to the spirit world proved even more damaging to communities that had "cast away" these spirits in the process of conversion to Protestant Baptist belief (Hayami 1996: 343).

Chi recollects that *tha*, especially funeral *tha*, no longer had any place in Baptist circles among the Muejekhi community. He writes,

> … within Karen communities that had converted to Christianity, the *Tha* was fading away, being abandoned, and was seen as a relic of the past and as less and less useful to contemporary generations. The *Mo cho*, leader of funeral music, had no role as the Karen began to adopt western, church-style song leadership led by a conductor.

> *Tha* was devalued as hymns arrived. Karen musical instruments were disregarded once western instruments (guitar, drum set, accordion, mouth organ, and others) came onto the scene. (2014: 31)

Annual Karen church conventions in Chiang Mai have long been noted for their accompanying musical performances, skits, and concert atmosphere. Some western missionaries affectionately referred to them as "Karen-tions" (Yasuko 1958:2). The music at these events ranged from choral pieces in four-part harmony performed by Karen choirs [CD track 11] to Chinese songs performed by reluctant American visiting missionaries (Yasuko 1961; Hunt 1961). When my wife and I visit these communities, we are always asked to perform something "foreign-sounding," as it lends an international flavor and caché to the gathering.[97]

With a concert expected at this "Karen-tion" in Muejekhi that year,[98] Chi describes an excited ad-hoc band gathering their local musical wisdom and instruments together:

> All of the top musicians skilled in *Pgak'nyaw* traditional music were invited to play, including Buna on the *saw* [bowed lute], Phahae on the *khwae* [free-reed buffalo horn], Ta-Aw on the Pgak'nyaw drum, Thunu on the leaf, Kawphaw on the gong, Loepho on the *kraw* [bamboo slit drum] and singing harmonies, and many others. The song master played the *tehnaku* [harp], leading the group by singing melody. (33)

With Karen church members from all over northern Thailand in attendance, the band was honored to represent Muejekhi. But they noticed a scowling elder sitting in the front row, frowning at the instruments (usually performances featured only western instruments at the convention) and the content of the songs (Karen proverbs). Chi closes the chapter with the elder's admonition and its outcome in Muejekhi:

> "THESE INSTRUMENTS! They are instruments of a bygone era! They are instruments of a people that did not yet know or believe in God! They are instruments that were used to worship the spirits, *Mara*, Satan! They are instruments for calling the spirits and souls of the sick and deceased. Therefore, they are not appropriate here and should not be brought into the church, the sacred temple of God. We should play music that is free of blemish, untainted, pure.

> Please see that this is the last time these instruments are played in a church. This destroys the honor of the church and God. Remember this!" He finished speaking. The festive atmosphere ended abruptly. Silence engulfed the space. He turned and exited the stage. Everyone in the band looked at each other, bewildered and astonished. Not knowing what to say, they just collected their things and walked off the stage, brokenhearted.…
>
> … After this, Karen traditional music became a thing forbidden. There was to be no opportunity for it to enter Karen churches in Muejekee ever again. *Tha* was forgotten, and those who sang it forgot that they were once *Mo Cho*, masters of *Tha* in their communities. (33-34)

In defiance of the church authorities, and nearly a decade later, Chi asked his father to teach him to play the tehnaku. His father warned him that it could get him into trouble, but Chi persisted, and lessons began. The song he learned was an appropriate one, *Naw Cha Tru*, about the girl who wanders so far from home that the chickens, rice pounders, and her mother's voice are all out of earshot. She must be called home. The song is a *tha*, which makes it open to interpretation and thus lends itself to reapplication as new contexts warrant, and Chi posits it as a metaphor of cultural loss. Thus, when he played it at a Karen Christmas festival held in a church with no complaints from the audience, he saw it as a positive step toward cultural revival. He describes his father's pride at the close of chapter seven:

> Father was relieved. He felt as if their music and culture were returning to the Christian Karen community. A newfound hope in his heart for musicians playing traditional Karen music began to wash over him. There may be a chance yet for its sound to be heard in the church again. (38)

Yet, even with the instrument becoming somewhat acceptable in church again, the funeral *tha* would not be, and Chi clashed with the Karen Christian community several more times in his exploration of *Forbidden Songs* (55-60; 73). To a degree, the audience had begun to "tune in" again to the tehnaku, to return to a state of participatory social synchrony. The *tha*, however, could not be reinserted in the same way.

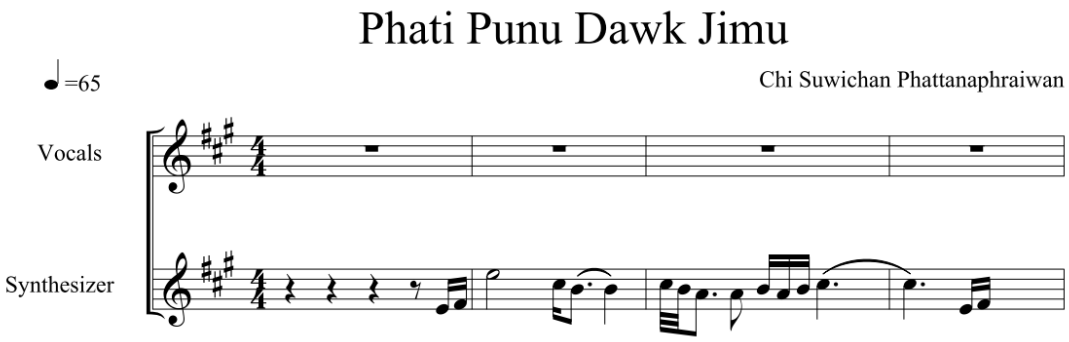
Some funeral *tha* contain what can be read as clues to Karen origins, which is part of the reason Chi sees them as necessary to preserve (another being that *tha* semantically indexes the flow state achieved in funerary communal participation). In his telling, they offer the possibility of the Karen being indigenous to the region (rather than being invasive migrants or secondary "ethnic minorities" of the state). They also speak to the second modern instance of intrusion of the outside world: lowland civilizations. In chapter eight, he recounts events following an eviction notice given to Karen communities in 1997 by Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai. A Karen elder and activist from Mae Wang district of Chiang Mai, *Phati* Punu Dawkjimu,[99] joined a group of protesters headed to Bangkok to speak to the minister of agriculture and industry Chuchip Hansawat. When negotiations failed, *Phati* Punu made good on his promise to not return home should he be unsuccessful: he jumped from the window of the train on the way back to Chiang Mai, killing himself and becoming a martyr for eco-indigenous activism (39-41).

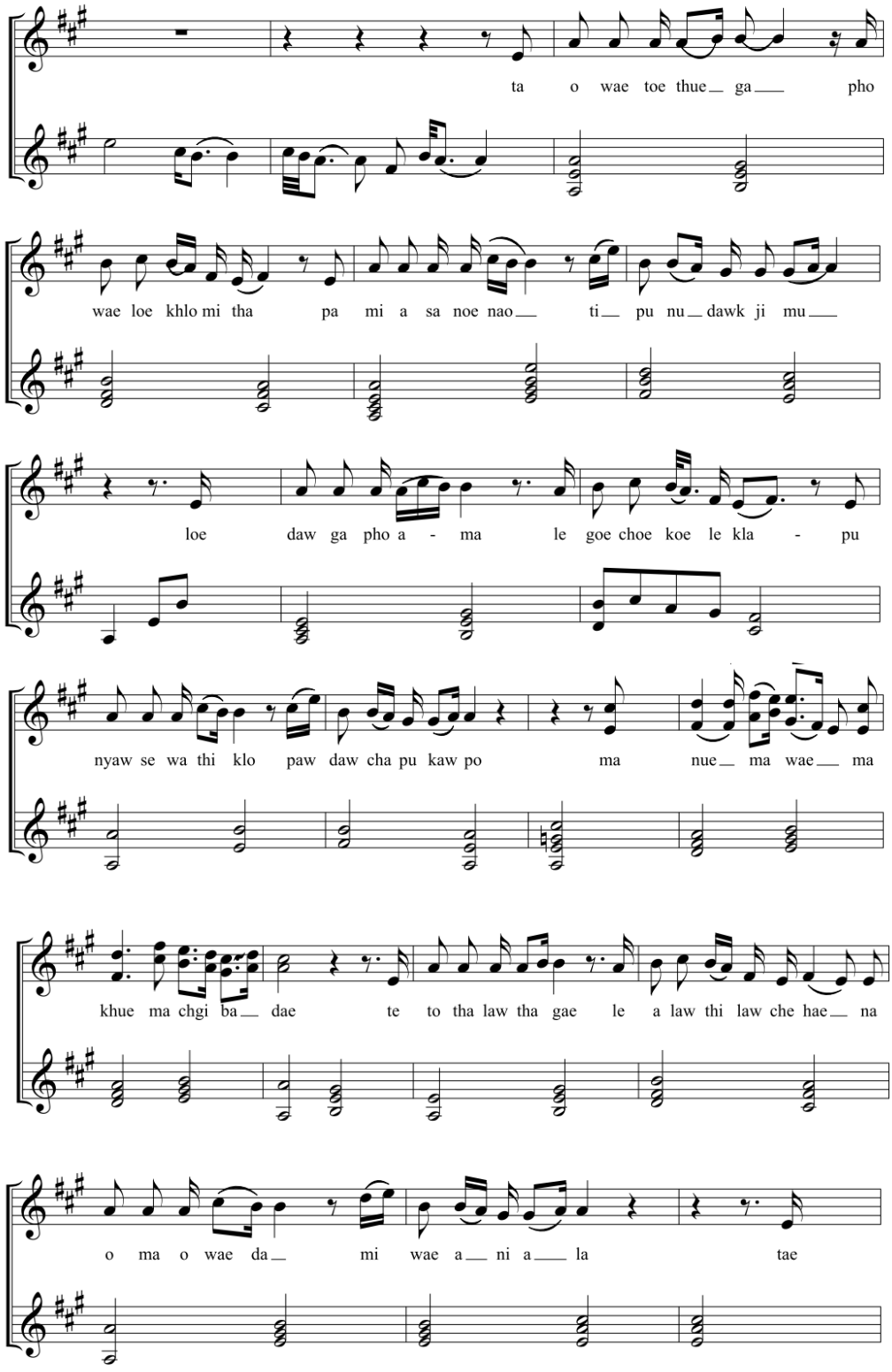
Chi collaborated with another Karen composer, *Phati* Awd, to write a tribute song for *Phati* Punu one year later, and found a funeral *tha* to quote in the song that appropriately spoke both to the death and to the continued lowland oppression of the Karen. The *tha* is called *Yota*, and embodies the typical theme of orphans and oppression. As Chi describes,

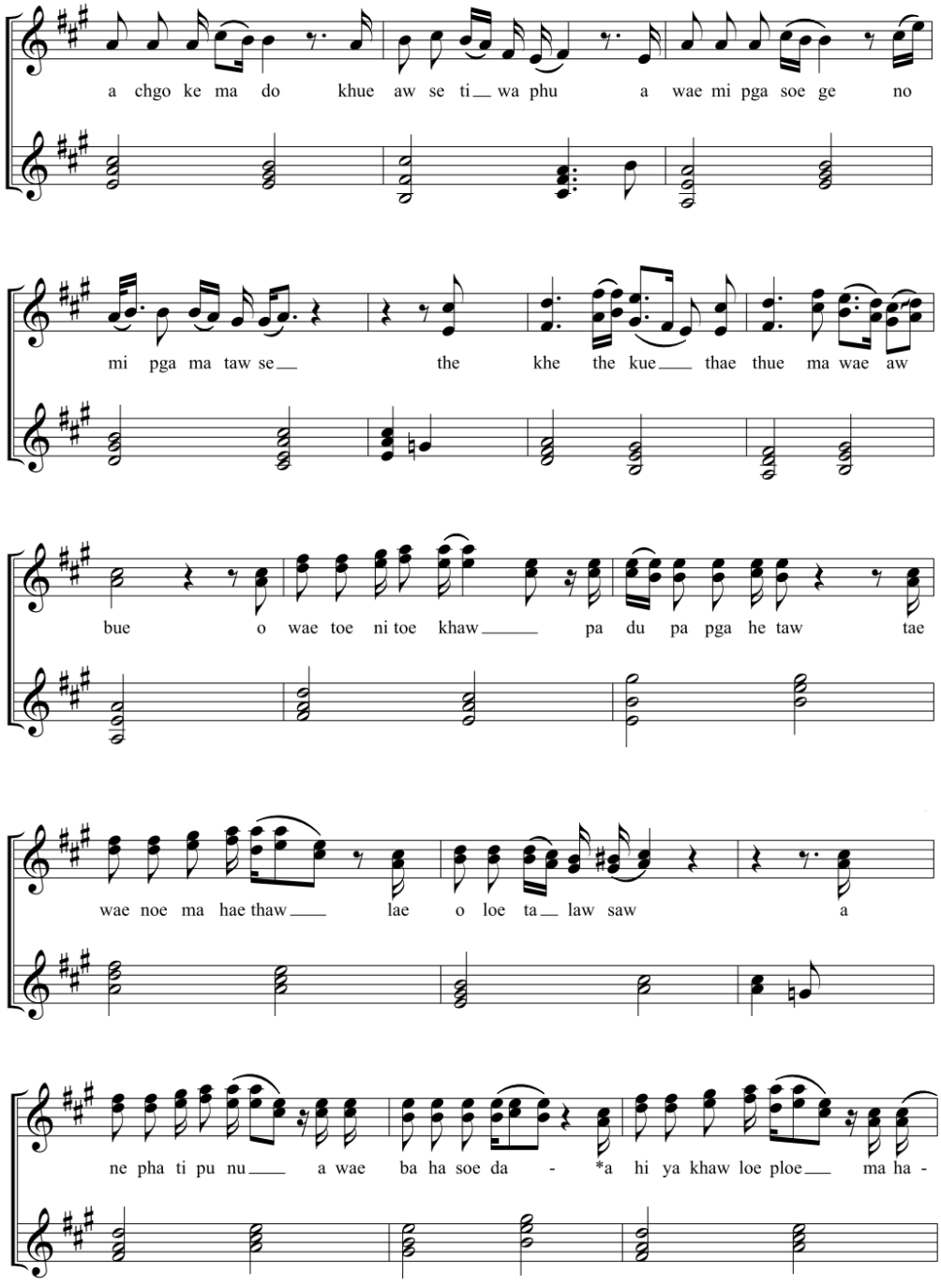
> The origin of funeral procession songs, or what the Karen call *tha yota*, are based on a legend that says in the past, the Karen had a great civilization in the land of *Wekimae*...There was a river, *Kimae*, separating the Karen land from the *Kowa* (Lawa people).The reason the Karen call the Lua "Kowa" is because their land was along the banks of the river "Kokola", or the Khong River, while the Karen lands lived on the banks of the "Khekola", or Salween (but the eastern side of the Salween)… Karen people say that the kingdom of *Kimae* was located in what is now Chiang Mai, with the Ping River as the divider between the Karen and Lawa lands. But there came a day when another ethnic group invaded, plundering and murdering in both Karen and Lawa territory.[100]
>
> The Karen had to disperse…In fleeing from that invasion, many died. In the funeral, then, there are laments that curse the invaders, robbers, and murders who

> took the Karen's land. There is a word that refers to those who drove out the Karen and caused their deaths: they are called the *Yo* people, and they are responsible for the Karen's houseless and landless situation.
>
> Nowadays, Karen people refer to people in the Lanna area as *Yo*. And these northerners call the Karen the *Yang*. People in the central region are called *Yo toe ra*, which might originally come from the name of the kingdom of Ayuthaya… what is absolutely certain here is that the *Yo* people were the ones who drove the Karen out of their land.
>
> This incident with the policy to evict people from the forests is not the same as the plunderous land grab of the past where the Karen and Lua lost their land, but it is similar, and the results are not so different.
>
> "They are taking it again, these *Yo*. That's how it was in the past, and today is no different. They see other's dwellings, their abundance, and they want it for themselves. When this happens, they destroy it all—the soil, the water, the forests, the air. What will happen next?" One elder in the Karen community complained, confused.
>
> "We must add the *tha Yota* into the song for *Phati* Punu, for the *Yo* have once again caused the death of a Karen man." I thought this and set my heart to it as I wrote the song. (42-44)

Chi points to this *tha* in making his claim that the Karen are the indigenous people of the north, along with the Lawa, who *are* currently recognized as such (Sarasawadee 30; Forbes and Henley 25).[101] The song is formatted somewhat like *The Beatles'* "Hey Jude" (and is just about as long), with a folk ballad-type first half and an inviting and participatory choral ending. The ballad tells the story of *Phati* Punu, accompanied by acoustic guitar and a synthesizer:




ta o wae toe thue ga pho
wae loe khlo mi tha pa mi a sa noe nao ti pu nu dawk ji mu
loe daw ga pho a - ma le goe choe koe le kla - pu
nyaw se wa thi klo paw daw cha pu kaw po ma nue ma wae ma
khue ma chgi ba dae te to tha law tha gae le a law thi law che hae na
o ma o wae da mi wae a ni a la tae


a chgo ke ma do khue aw se ti wa phu a wae mi pga soe ge no
mi pga ma taw se the khe the kue thae thue ma wae aw
bue o wae toe ni toe khaw pa du pa pga he taw tae
wae noe ma hae thaw lae o loe ta law saw a
ne pha ti pu nu a wae ba ha soe da - *a hi ya khaw loe ploe ma ha -

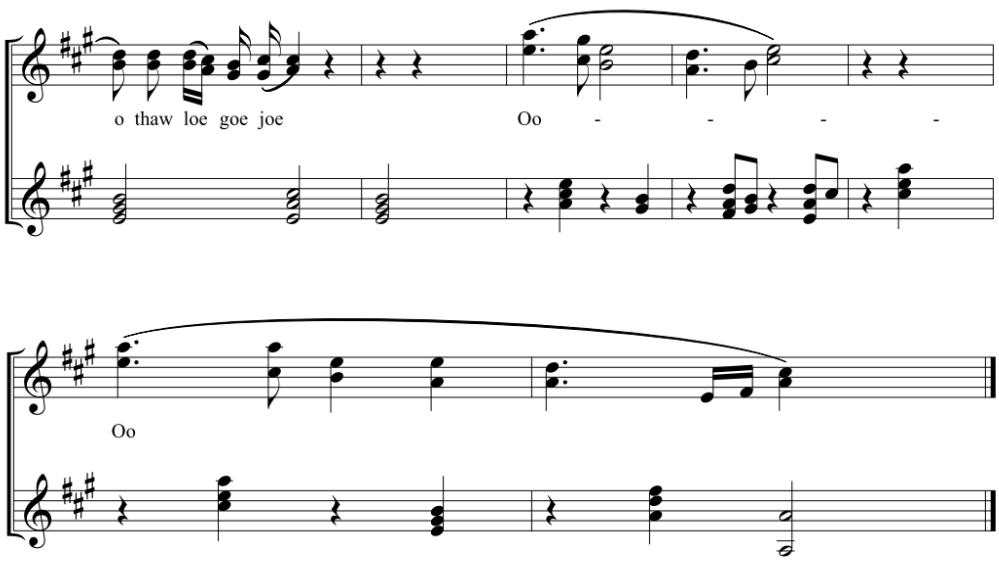


Figure 12: "*Phati* Punu Dawk Jimu" (Man without Fame), by Chi Suwichan**. [CD track 09]**

The translation is provided in *Forbidden Songs* as:

> *There was a Karen elder of Khometha village,*
> *A man without fame:* Phati *Punu Dawk Jimu.*
>
> *He lived with his wife and children, in the forested, mountainous area,*
> *Amidst the trees, people, animals, and the forest co-existed.*
>
> *He rotated his fields, planted rice, had a hut and a house and a community,*
> *Had land to make a living and had a stable way of life.*
>
> *He made a living for his family, as have many generations prior,*
> *Had knowledge of forest preservation, knew how to use medicinal herbs.*
>
> *He was so generous, multi-talented,*
> *He could weave baskets and traps for mice, he would share what he caught.*
>
> *But there came a day when his worst nightmares came to pass, government orders reached the hills,*
> *Demanding the people leave the forests and move to a new location that had been prepared for them.*
>
> *So* Phati *Punu had to leave his birthplace, his home in the forest,*
> *His community would become a thing of the past, their ways would become mere legends.*

(Spoken section next includes the original words of Phati *Punu before he committed suicide)*[102]

> *Our home, our forests. We lived and cared for them since the days of our ancestors. Why must they come and persecute us like this? Why keep living? The government cares not for us. Going back home is the same as death, a roundabout detour to destruction. It is better to die now than to fight it.*

At the new location, our children cannot live,
They cannot farm, cannot grow rice. Everything must be purchased with money.

We have no knowledge of city life. We know not what they are up to.
My descendants, grandchildren, and great grandchildren will be their slaves.

The more I think, the sadder and more worried I become. What will our life become next?
March has arrived, and we have no time to prepare the fields.

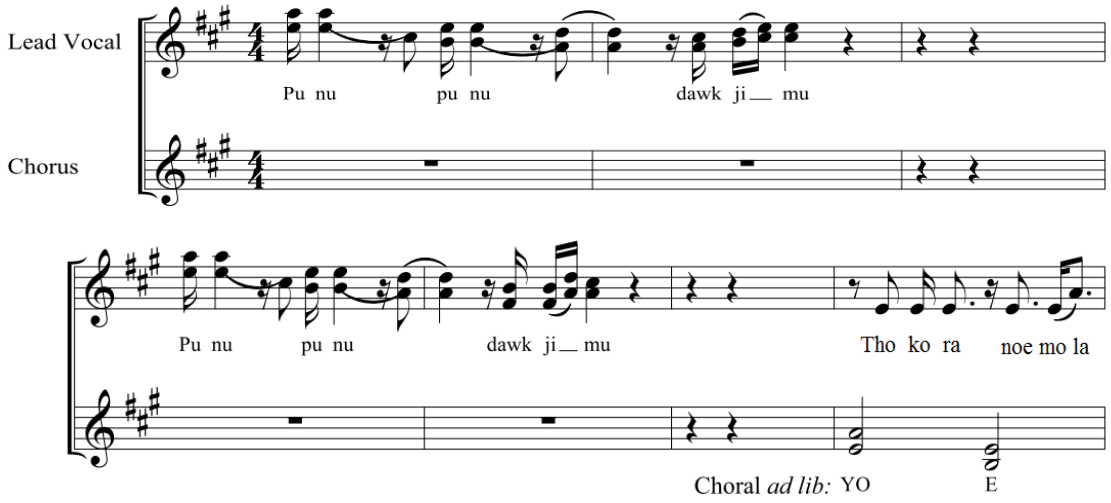
We have to leave for Bangkok to demand our right to return to our forest.
When he heard of the government resolution, Punu's heart nearly crumbled.

On the 5th of March, he was sent back to Kimae (Chiang Mai),
Expired were his soul and spirit, and he met his death outside the train window.

Punu, Punu, Dawkjimu, Punu, Punu, Dawk Jimu,
Yo e Yo aw Yo e Yo aw, Yo e Yo aw yo e Yo aw. (2014: 44-45)

This song tells the story of *Phati* Punu and his quest to preserve his people's right, as indigenous occupants, to continue living in the forests. In terms of Turino's participation-presentation continuum, the song does not engage nor encourage participation up to this point. Participatory music, which enables "heightened social interaction" (2008: 28), offers a chance for difference to be disintegrated within the context of focused activity that organizes and synchronizes sound, movement, thought, and identity (18). The ending of the piece here attempts such synchronization through the insertion of the funeral *tha Yota*. This musical act attempts to tap into the multi-layered importance of the *tha:* the excitement of courtship at funerals (or the nostalgic remembrance of it, as it is paired with care-free youth), its ability to unify the Karen on

a supra-village level both in the immediate terms of co-village funerary participation and in metaphorical terms of gathering the people (Suwichan 2014: 23), and its ability to "other" the *Yo* oppressors and confirm Karen orphan status.[103] Here, as with the northern Thai anthem of Lanna, the normenon that is *tha* proves ever-relevant, seeking to ground a community in tradition while speaking to modern contexts. And it is the *performative* and *participatory* aspect of the *tha* that would transform the passive audience to active participants in tradition and community. Participatory performance here acts as "a special type of artistic practice in which there are no artist-audience distinctions, only participants and potential participants performing different roles, and the primary goal is to involve the maximum number of people in some performance role" (Turino 2008: 26). This attempt can be heard as Chi swaps out the ballad for the choral, participatory ending. Chi sings a funeral *tha* over a crowd performance of *tha Yo Ta* (about the *Yo* lowland oppressors):



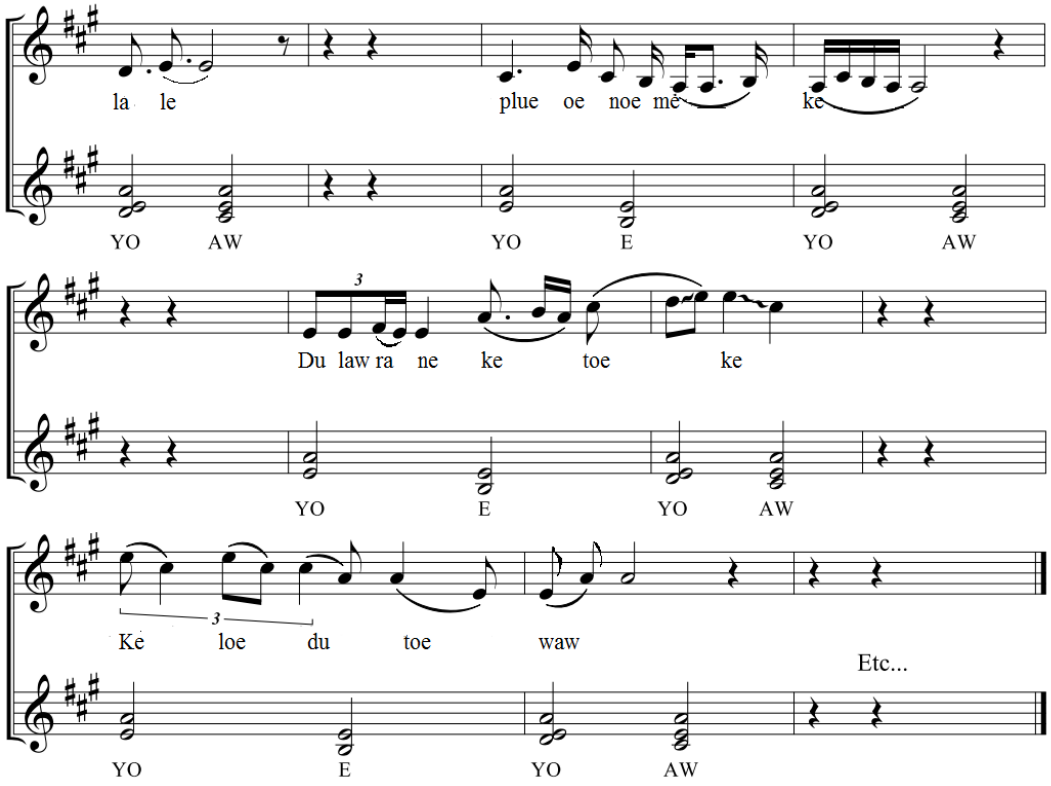


Figure 13: *Tha Yo ta* (Participatory ending of "*Phati* Punu Dawk Jimu). Lyrics are meant as directions to the deceased, informing them as to the correct path to the next world (*Dulawra*) and reminding them that directions there are reversed (their sun sets in the east, their up is our down, etc…) (See Suwichan 2014: 57-58).

Chi was able to perform this song at a village concert that took place on the anniversary of *Phati* Punu Dawk Jimu's death. Though worried about the ramifications and implications of performing a funeral song out of context, he observed firsthand the uniting power of the funeral song, paired to a commemoration of a respected elder and indigenous rights activist. From the stage, he noticed:

> As I started the introduction, people recognized it as "Punu Dawk Jimu," as shown by their applause. I started singing and was approaching the section with *Tha Yo,* and the repeats of the name "Punu Punu Dawk Jimu." When I got to the *Tha*, I thought I would just not sing it, figuring that the listeners would not accept it. Before I could stop, the participants started singing it: "Yo e Yo aw…." Those who could joined in on the *Tha* part, which caused every one of my hairs to stand on end. I happily listened to them singing the *Tha* and accompanied them on my guitar vigorously, breaking two strings!... The thing I was most taken aback by was that though this celebration was not a funeral, I was able to sing the song

without any objection. (2014: 47)

This moment of unity and participation turned out to be the exception, however. When played on Karen radio across the north, listeners frequently called in to complain to the DJ and ask if he could stop the song when it got to the funeral portion (46). And Baptist Christian Karen communities especially did not want to participate in animist traditions of any kind (31-39). Turino does point to the uniting power of participatory music, saying that "It is *in the doing* that the feelings and direct experience of being in sync with others is most pronounced, and this is the reason that participatory music is so valuable in societies throughout the world" (44). Yet while Chi's hope is for the participatory ending of "*Phati Punu Dawk Jimu*" to encourage and enact social synchrony, the dual nature of identity formation is downplayed in Turino's discourse—as Thongchai notes, borders keep people together, but they also exclude (1994: 15-16). While Turino acknowledges that participatory music is not all positive—the darker uses of participatory music in political mob mentality are not ignored— what about those who refuse to dance, who seek to ban participation, who feel excluded or choose to self-exclude? Perhaps Turino's discussion of "social synchrony" can make additional space for the notion of distancing, or "tuning out" (to turn Schutz's phrase on its head). Where synchrony implies coordination with no standouts, distancing draws attention by not following the expected course. Participatory music also has its resisters.

In addition to those who called in to the radio station and the Christian Karen communities, another striking example of this distancing can be seen in two Youtube posts of the above song. "*Phati* Punu Dawk Jimu" was adopted as the 1998 official song of the Karen Network for Culture and Environment, an NGO working on indigenous peoples' rights within "Thai" forest areas. The two versions of the video posted on Youtube[104] are nearly identical,

featuring slide shows of various Karen activist meetings, marches, forest areas, and protests. The only difference is that one is just seven minutes long, cutting off abruptly as the "forbidden" and participatory *Tha Yo Ta* begins. The potential for social synchrony here is disrupted by internal disputes as to when participation is appropriate, if at all.

I conferred with Chi about this discrepancy between the two videos. He was not at all surprised by the refusal to post the *tha*. Christians avoid it due to its connections to animist spirit belief, and animists as well as Buddhists tend to be afraid of its draw on weak spirits—to hear a "forbidden" Karen *tha* such as this outside a funeral context is to be called away to the afterlife. Thus, "participation," extending even to the act of merely listening, can be a dangerous activity. Chi's academic attempts to repurpose it are here met with fear and rejection by many. Yet even amidst the conversations advocating for distancing, Karen identity and community are still being formulated and affirmed. Audience responses show this by-product of non-participation.

The Audience

As a text, *Forbidden Songs* shows the gradual decline of *tha* within Muejekhi. In some instances, *tha* is being neglected due to its non-modern and non-Thai character in the drive to assimilate and modernize (Suwichan 2014: 67-70). In some cases, Christian leadership circles discourage and ban it outright (73), causing rifts within the Karen community. Regardless of the motivations or causes of neglect, Chi finds himself facing a Karen community relatively ignorant of *tha* and uncertain of its place in the 21st century.[105] An analysis of audience responses to his attempts to re-insert it, sometimes in innovative or "inappropriate" places, speaks to the distancing issue.

Chi's presentation is primarily academic. He calls for interpretive research of the *tha* as a means of reinvigorating them and refitting them with new meaning (92-94). Here reapplied, the

tha can speak to modern issues while drawing upon ancestral wisdom. This approach especially appeals to NGOs, idealists, and academics (McKinnon 67). Theologian Esther Dangpongpee saw the reintroduction of the *tehnaku* harp to Christian worship services as a means of cultural preservation, and hopes Chi's music career will inspire the next generation to recommit to tradition (personal interview; see also Dangpongpee 2002). John Goldney's film, *Songs from the Karen Forest*, contains interviews with inspired community leaders, NGO workers, and family members who believe in the work Chi is doing through his music. McKinnon predicts that "If the Karen are to persist as Karen this may well depend upon them being able to…find expression in the language and symbols of the past to speak to the present" (81). For the above audiences, it does communicate these ideas.

Yosthana, a Karen Christian and accomplished musician, invited my wife and I to attend an all-Karen church gathering of young people from Omkoi near the urban core of Chiang Mai. The service was held in the home of a Swiss missionary couple (who were not present) in a small downstairs room. The music and message was amplified, upbeat, and in Thai. In Yosthana's view, the Karen college students in attendance needed a chance to practice speaking and hearing Thai in order to be able to better integrate into urban college life.[106] Our conversation steered toward Chi's music. While Yosthana does not really prefer to listen to (and does not feel a pull to participate in) Chi's music in his free time (he favors loud, distorted metal because of its "power"),[107] he does hold Chi in high regard since he sees Chi on Thai TV earning respect for the Karen people. Though Yosthana sees no need for the *tha* (as a Christian) and does not profess to be very knowledgeable about it, he still describes Chi's music as "not really traditional" in that it is a modernized contemporary music that Chi plays, just on a traditional instrument (Personal interview). The *tha*, traditional or not, had no draw for him. His participation in Karen tradition

or a Karen we-self would have to be drawn from elsewhere, but it still would be drawn.

When I interviewed Chair in 2011 for my MA research, he preferred the electric guitar to the *tehnaku*, saying the *tehnaku* was old-fashioned and outdated.[108] Now that he works at the tribal tourist village, he has been brushing up on his songs by Omkoi artist Tue Pho [CD track 08, 13]. Chi and Tue Pho offered an easy comparison in that their styles are markedly different. In Chair's diplomatic way of putting it, Chi has "developed" the *tehnaku*, "contemporized" it, so much so that Chi's music does not draw Chair in to participation as does Tue Pho. He continues,

> There's no one to pass on knowledge of the tehnaku these days….Karen people have new cultural influences. They socialize. To each his own. Socialization causes us to change like this, like that. There are some that still have it, but most kids nowadays don't have the chance to hear about our past.
>
> [Tue Pho and Chi] are not the same. Tue Pho is the original or traditional sound. Chi tries to adapt our culture: if you don't self-develop, you'll die. If you are against everything new, you'll lose out. But if you can adjust, you can last longer… personally, I like the traditional sound, but it's good that we try new things that allow others to understand us. For example, you have *farang* [white] friends, and they come in contact with these old ways, they'll be interested, but it's hard for them to understand. If you have a balanced way to present it, it will be easier for them to understand. But it depends on your taste. For me, I like Tue Pho more. I listen, close my eyes, I think about life. But the others are good. It's all *evolution* of culture.
>
> I think Thai people think that Chi's music is traditional, because they really don't know anything about our tradition. But media allows them to know us, these things allow them to know about our traditions. Traditional symbols of our people, if you study them really, you'll see that they are always changing. If they don't change, they die. If you change them too much, that's not good either. … really, the tehnaku is related/connected to lifeways. It's not just a thing to sing songs with. It has aesthetics, context. But most people don't really understand that. But, what Chi does is, when you make a music video, people can see these aspects of culture. It allows people to have greater understanding. If we explain just by the ancient ways, they'll just be bored or unimpressed. But to do it better, you should have both sound and video, they'll see we have this, we have that, it keeps up with the times. (Chair, personal interview)

To Chair, Chi's music invites people beyond the we-self into participation but does not

really do much for the we-self in participatory terms. Chair notes that as a label, "traditional" is rarely unanimous or fixed. It is a valuation of the audience, and this evaluation is a statement of ethnic construction. The act of affirming or denying Chi's attempt to reinstate Karen *tha* is an act of Karen identity negotiation via distancing rather than synchrony.

Chi's most recent album, *Ta Ti Ta Taw* (2014), inserts *tha*, quotes legends, and features traditional Karen instruments throughout the album.[109] Yet, for Chair, the music, though obviously "Karen," is not traditional. Sanchi, a Karen woman (originally from Burma) that I interviewed at Payap University agreed with this overall trend: Chi is a great artist, well-spoken and doing great things for the Karen people worldwide, but his music is not "traditional" (in her view, the timbre was too sweet).

These various audience responses are not meant to devalue Chi's music in any sense, and the implication here is not that it *should* be "traditional." Rather, audience responses demonstrate that the consumption of the music spurs conversations about Karenness whether the reviews are favorable or not. In other words, whether the masses are joining in with Chi and rallying behind his music in social synchrony or whether they are rejecting his innovations as un-Christian, untraditional, or outdated via "tuning out" or distancing, both audience responses are still instances of social engagement, and ethnic construction is a relational, social process (Barth 1969; Thongchai 1994). That participation in the funeral *tha* is "forbidden" by different Karen populations and rejected for different reasons requires Karen listeners to reflect on why, according to Karen values and identity, they refuse to participate. For the animists (and Buddhists), refusing to participate or even listen is an affirmation of the funeral music's position in Karen traditional spirituality (to hear the music out of context is to risk being called away to the afterlife). For Christian communities, the funeral *tha* represents a traditional belief system

that has been reformed as still-ethnically Karen *sans* spirits.[110] Thus, the music in that participatory sense brings Karen listeners into a process of ethnic reflection regardless of the disparate aesthetic conclusions.

The culturally compelling way to turn such passive audiences into active participants is to make the activity enjoyable. Csikszentmihalyi points to the combination of skill, goal-orientation, and rule-bound activities that encourage and demand attention to such a degree that worries about time and consciousness of the self fall by the wayside as enjoyment peaks (71). Chi showed this was possible in Karen funeral activities and collective singing of "Punu Dawk Jimu," though conscious statements regarding that enjoyment were not forthcoming from participants. The next chapter brings this local value of "fun" to the foreground.

CHAPTER 4. Village Unity: Symbolized or Enacted? Lahu Music-Dance and Ethnic Participation in Ban Musoe.

Chi Suwichan Phattanaphraiwan has faced strong institutions (church and state) as he seeks to reinstate traditional elements of Karen culture in what has been an uphill battle to get the Karen in Thailand to dance and sing funeral songs again. This resistance has also opened many alternative ways and means to be Karen—there is no "consensus" (Walker 2001). This chapter examines the relatively "newly arrived" Lahu ethnic minority (as opposed to the Karen who claim indigenous status and rights), who have not been nearly as organized as have the Karen in Thailand. Here, Christian conversion has not been as widespread or as nation-catalyzing as it was for the Karen, and, comparatively, no other institutions (indigenous or appropriated) have been adopted by Lahu populations in Thailand to unite them across villages, provinces, or nations. Music-Dance, however, may be understood as such a unifying entity.

Introduction to the Issue

Anthony Walker describes a fixture of Lahu village life, ritual, and collective identity in his depiction of the "great merit days," or *shi nyi.* As Walker puts it, these ritual events were the only instance where the otherwise household-centric villagers acted as one and demonstrated village unity, at least in symbolic terms. Each occurrence of the great merit days would be accompanied by three ritual activities: the mixing of water, the mixing of rice, and ritual dance (1984: 278). Walker points to the first two activities to make claims about symbolic unity yet does not position music-dance as doing what the rice and water activities do:

> From every household a female representative brings her own vessel of water and pours some into the common vessel held by the *la shaw ma* [female ritual official]. This mixing of water symbolizes the unity of the village community…
>
> Sometime during the eve of *shi nyi*, each household presents a little uncooked rice to the *to bo pa*'s [village senior priest] wife…On the next day the *to bo pa* will

> offer this "mixed" rice—again symbolizing the unity of the village community—to *Gui fu*, the guardian spirit of the village.
>
> After darkness falls on *shi nyi* eve, the village temple becomes the center of dancing in honor of *Gui sha* [the supreme deity]…On *shi nyi* itself, food offerings are presented… (278-279)

Walker spends the remainder of the article describing and discussing – validating Nietz's critique (1990) – only the ritual paraphernalia and actions (baskets, beeswax candles, wood, sand, rice grains, incantation texts, and other items) and the symbolic meaning of each. Whenever music-dance comes up as a topic, though, it is nearly brushed aside with only passing reference or a single sentence. For example, we learn that sand is gathered, influenced by Thai *Songkran* customs, and put into mounds as penance for the animals killed in swiddening; posts are carved in honor of the supreme deity *Gui sha* as a testament to his authority, their bark stripped off to make the post resemble a fabled white stone of heaven (280-282); and so on. Pictures of each act are also included. Yet, when it comes to the topic of music-dance, we learn only that, "The rites of the ordinary *shi nyi* end, sometimes late at night, with more dancing in the village temple" (280). Period. Similarly, entire texts of ritual prayers are transcribed and translated (284-89) with footnotes elaborating on their meaning and origins, but when the sun sets and the dancing begins, "The crowd now disperses, but some people, especially the younger ones, return later in the evening to dance inside the temple in honor of *Gui sha*" (289). And that's it.

Granted, Walker's larger point is to demonstrate the connections these rituals have to Thai and lowland belief systems (i.e., their commonalities with Thai holidays *Songkran* and *Khao Phansaa*, *Awk Phansaa*)[111] to show that the Lahu were never an isolated or undisturbed people. But there is a noticeable gap here when it comes to the music-dance itself. It is not described in any manner, but, more than that, it is not linked at all to the village unity he lifts up

with the rice and water mixing rituals. These rituals he sees as an opportunity for *symbolic* unity (278), but the Lahu music-dance itself represents an untapped opportunity to examine *enacted* unity through a participatory medium, one where the village is physically gathered and moving together as one in a mode much more emotional and flow-inducing than the abstract and symbolic act of combining rice into a communal pot. Key to understanding the importance of dance is the aspect of fun, a concept that, as with the co-occurrence of great merit and Thai holidays, is shared with their lowland neighbors. Fun (Thai: *sanuk*; northern Thai: *muan*; Lahu: *chaw da*) shows up again and again in the conversations I had regarding New Year activities, and they were mostly in reference to the highly anticipated *ten ja khue* (Lahu dance).[112]

This chapter thus applies participatory notions of "flow" and "groove", the "feelingful" (Keil and Feld, 146) and emotional draw of participatory musical engagement, to Walker's Lahu ritual descriptions to show that Lahu music-dance offers a much more compelling window into felt, embodied, and expressed Lahu identity (though I do not deny that symbolic gestures of unity are important and have their place). In this process, I will introduce the Lahu of northern Thailand and discuss the particular site and its place within ethnographic history of the region as well as my own personal experience of rapport-building. Lahu land-management is an important part of the history that brings us to opium, cabbage, forestry management, and tourism, so each of these factor into the narrative. Tourism especially complicates lowland/highland relations and centers around the dance, but the dance activity is not as commercial as much as it is ethno-generative (or at least ethno-affirmative), and this is my ultimate destination. I show that the music-dance has a place, space, and context for the people as a people and that it operates as much more than metaphor and within the realm of "fun," which is not to be underestimated in its importance.

Lahu and the Literature in Thailand

While the Karen can argue for indigenous status (though it cannot ultimately be proven), no such case exists for the "recently" arrived Lahu, Akha, and Lisu groups, who are "relative newcomers" to the highlands of Thailand's north (Walker 1995: 56). With a global population today nearing 700,000 and the majority still living near their place of origin in Yunnan, China (Nishimoto 2), "the" Tibeto-Burman speaking Lahu[113] are a diverse and scattered population with "no overarching international Lahu community and certainly no formal political organization of Lahu in Thailand beyond the village" (Pine 230; also Walker 1985:2). In Thailand they number over 80,000 (Ma 11; Solot 14).

Lahu groups began migrating southward out of Lancang, China after a legendary semi-autonomous kingdom was taken over by encroaching Han administration in the early-mid 19th century, at which point they began moving into Laos, Burma, and Thailand (Solot 20; Jones 1967:17). Western missionaries and colonial administrators documented Lahu villages in the Shan state of Burma as early as 1837 (Solot 21) and Fang district of Chiang Rai by the 1880s or 90s (Pine 228; Walker 1992:56; Jones 1967:17). This first wave of migration consisted of mainly Lahu *Nyi*, or Red Lahu (today the majority of Lahu in Thailand) who are but one of many sub-classifications of Lahu identity that in some cases seemed arbitrarily linked to livelihood, language, religion, dress, or other real or imagined distinguishing features (Jones 1967; Walker 1992)[114]. Other subgroups include the Lahu *Na* (black), Lahu *Shi* (yellow), and Lahu *Sheleh* (not translatable) (Ma 11). Jones concluded in a comparative study of six Lahu villages that "What is true of one Lahu village is not necessarily true of any other Lahu village," making ethnic classification a rather arbitrary yet still important endeavor as contact with lowland Thai communities increased in the 20th century (1967:184).[115] This chapter focuses on a Lahu *Na*

community in Omkoi district of Chiang Mai.

While the first wave of immigration mainly brought Lahu *Nyi* into northern *Siam* without much commotion or as an intentional "border" crossing, migrations in the 1940s of Lahu *Na* from Burma into *Thailand* were more noticeable to officials and had political implications in a then-nationalist era.[116] Solot describes a wave of migration after the British exit from Burma in the 1940s, where a millennialist Lahu cult founded upon a localized millenarian adoption of Christianity attempted an autonomous state atop a mountain in Chiang Tung and was swiftly put down by Burmese lowland authorities. Lahu had flocked to the site in large numbers under the leadership of Maw Na *To B*o, a religious visionary, donating their silver, amassing weaponry, and awaiting supreme deity *Guisha*'s descent to the mountain.[117] Maw Na *To Bo*'s resistance was crushed, and he fled with his family into Fang district (Chiang Mai), where his religious following continued until his death in 1984 (Solot 22-23).

Ethnographers view these two historic Lahu attempts at a larger political organization as the exception to what is a Lahu norm of very small units of governance. Walker maintains that the nuclear family is the center of Lahu society, and only in periodic and ritual times are multiple villages, or even the single village, ever united in ceremony (1984:279).[118] On this point of organization there is room for nuance. While Walker's studies of the Lahu *Nyi* insist that Lahu, unlike their Hmong or Akha contemporaries, pay little attention to clan kinship beyond the immediate parents, except for perhaps the *Sheleh* branch (1992: 57-58), Jones' study of Lahu *Na* communities around the same time (both did fieldwork in the 60s in Thailand) contains reports of kinship terms that apply to the village as one family or perhaps even the Lahu *Na* (but not the *Nyi*) as one supra-village family (1967:48). Further, sometimes *Na* and *Sheleh* are not described as separate groups but are folded in to one: Lahu *Na Sheleh* (Hill, *et al*. 2013: 23). While some

degree of organization is at work—there is a discursive entity that is "the Lahu"— the norm seems to be for autonomous family units that only at ritual times affirm a larger identity with or as the village. [119] It is these uniting ideals that enable the broader ethnic label to fit, or to be claimed by people groups who otherwise downplay any other differences between them.

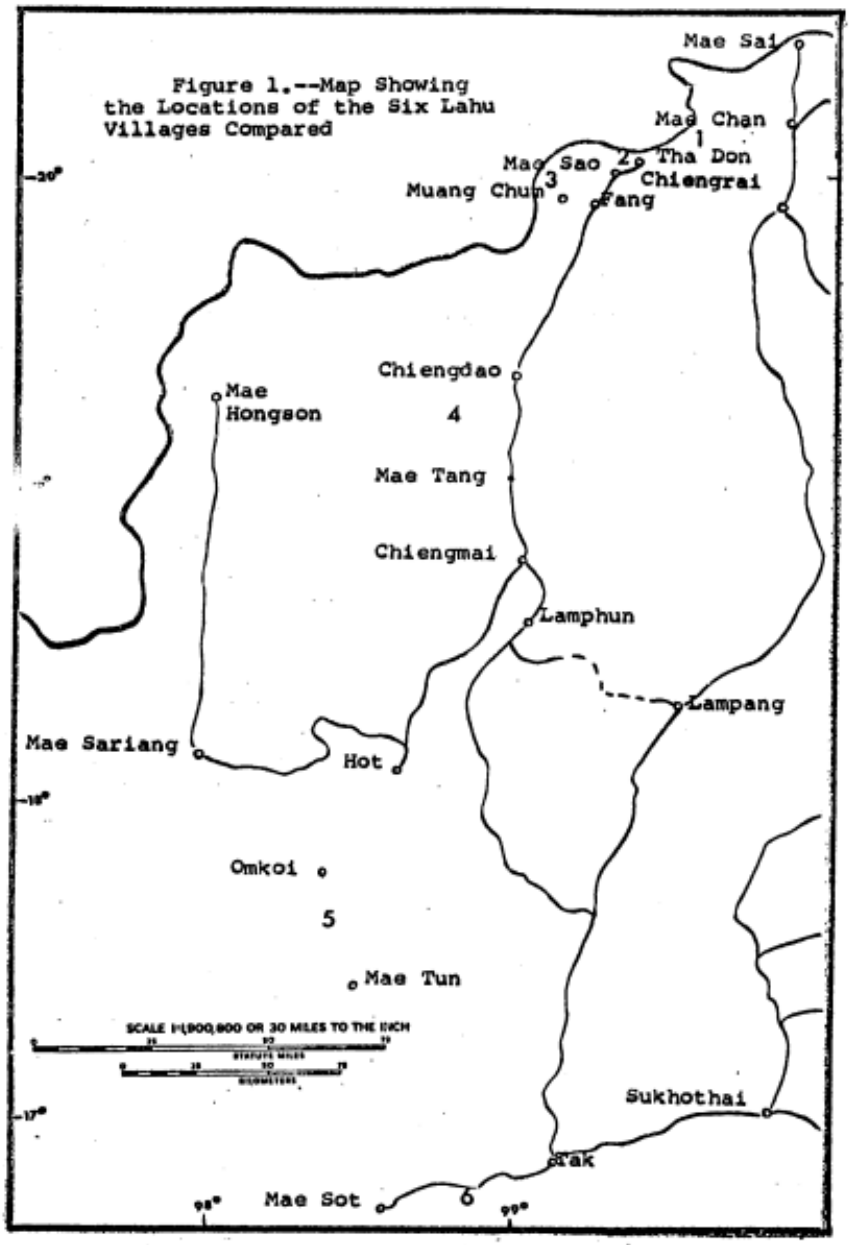


Figure 14: Jones' map of six Lahu villages (1967:8). Village #5, in his study labeled "Doi La Muang" [Doi Lang Mueang/Ban Musoe], between Omkoi and Mae Tun [Mae Tuen], is the site of my ethnographic research.

Delmos Jones' ethnography of the Lahu (1967) compares six villages, spanning from Chiang Rai border frontiers to Omkoi district in Chiang Mai to as far south as Tak district in Mae Sot. While the one Christian village, Hweitad, was nearly unrecognizable as Lahu in terms of ritual spaces, agricultural practice, dress, health care, literacy, and livelihood (157), the other five (both *Nyi* and *Na*) had several commonalities.[120] All made their homes on high-altitude slopes (usually above 900 meters). All demonstrate some sort of belief in a heavenly Lahu creator deity, *Guisha*, a male cosmic creator force balanced out by a female deity.[121] All relied extensively on *To Bo Pa*[122] (spiritual leaders who also came as male/female pairs) responsible for appealing to the male and female village protector spirits *hkaw sheh hpa* and *hkaw sheh ma* and for driving out evil spirits, who were the result of a "bad death" and sought to return to the village draw others away (Walker 1992:340). All had some degree of insufficiency of rice production, grown on swiddens, supplemented by cash crop production—typically opium (Jones 1967:181)—which put them in frequent contact initially with lowland market economies and authorities.

The Lahu practice of opium cultivation marks a major entry point of Thai oversight and concerns. Before opium was outlawed, its trade, and the contact of Lahu growers with Chinese and Thai vendors, meant that Lahu villages were neither economically self-sufficient nor isolated but rather ever-dependent on and shaped by lowland trade activities (Jones 1971: 4). Since rice grown on swiddens was never enough to sustain the village population, the remainder had to be supplemented through cash crop exchange. Opium enabled participation in a lowland cash economy, and incomes of Lahu in the hills were affected by fluctuating prices and trade activities as far away as Bangkok. Many Lahu villages had mediating Chinese and Thai traders in regular contact and sometimes in cohabitation (Jones 1967:143).

These unbalanced trade relations with lowlanders gave way in the 1960s political discourse to the "hill tribe problem" (Kwanchewan 375) discussed in chapter three. Of all the non-Thai, problematic "hill tribe" groups, the newly arrived Tibeto-Burman speakers were seen as the worst offenders, a destructive force to be stopped from burning the nation's forests and supplying the drug trade.[123] Lahu communities complained that lowland Thais viewed them as "lazy, good for nothing jungle people" (Jones 1971: 9) and that they constantly felt in danger of arrest or bullying from Thai government officials and forestry workers.[124] Nishimoto quotes the lyrics of a Christian Lahu pop song that demonstrates these village situations and lowland powers at work (12).

> ***Pamai (Royal Forestry Department)***
> Pamai *has come, my land was planted for conservation.*
> *If I cut trees, I would be thrown into prison. What a nuisance!*
>
> *I can't appeal to anyone. There is no land to plough for the Lahu,*
> *In the mountains, can't eat, go to town, with labor work, just a meager living*
>
> *Even working in the* Pamai *tree planting, no hope to have an easy life,*
> *Without work, no food, slave to others, for the Lahu, Life becomes poor.*
>
> *There is no land to plough for the Lahu, in the mountains,*
> *Can't eat, go to town, with labor work, Just a meager living*
>
> *Give me a job, even at a construction site.*[125]

Peter Hoare discusses these events in some detail in his contribution to Walker's *The Highland Heritage* (1992: 163-206), noting that prior to the 1950s, little attention was paid to the highlanders by the central Thai government, an unofficial policy and period Ronald Renard has labeled "benign neglect" (1980: 219). A large influx of Lahu arrived and settled many new areas (via pioneering swiddening techniques) in the wake of unrest in Burma in 1954, just as Thai official scrutiny was turning toward the hills. At this time, official royal policy shifted to

reforestation and integration, and authorities hoped to turn impoverished Lahu swiddeners into first class, literate, Thai-speaking, self-reliant citizens (Hoare in Walker 168, 187). The Royal Thai Forestry department linked the hills to the Chao Phraya watershed, connecting the nation's capital's main river to its northern sources. Forestry bans on swiddening, the forbidding of opium production, and all-out agricultural bans on any land over a 30% slope drastically reduced Lahu agricultural capacity, especially rice, which was, as Jones noted, insufficient even with traditional swiddening practice (1971). Thai development models responded to the Lahu situation by retraining Lahu producers to grow new, legal cash crops such as coffee, fruit trees, and, later, cabbage. These crops moved communities away from rice production and deepened connections to markets, cash economies, and lowland Thai communities (Hoare 195). "Integration," then, was a targeted effort couched in agricultural and development models for Lahu communities. As production shifted away from swiddening and away from rice, Lahu communities became ever more dependent on cash exchanges (coffee sold, rice purchased), governmental assistance, and chemical inputs.

Ban Musoe Village(s)

When I first was introduced to Ban Musoe[126] (population: 1,336)[127] in Omkoi back in 2007, an entire generation had been born and raised within this cash crop production system implemented in the 1970s (Renard 2001). South of the village cluster atop the mountain pass stands a large patch of pine trees that was planted in the 1980s-90s as a royal project and is now protected by a small staff of Thai royal forestry officials. North of the village (between Omkoi and Ban Musoe) is a large forest of teak that noticeably thins out as one approaches Ban Musoe's surrounding tree-bare hills of red soil, acres and acres of cabbage, and mini-droves of black pigs poking out of the tall grasses by the highway.

I was working as a Peace Corps community development volunteer at the Sub-district Administrative Organization (SAO) when I first met Ja Gaw and Ja Thaw, the two serving council members (*samachik*) for Ban Musoe. They showed up once a month for the SAO council meetings in their gray Toyota Hilux Vigo pickups fitted with steel cages (for transporting cabbage) and splotched red with mud on all sides. These trucks, along with wooden houses and yellow satellite dishes, operated as outward displays of wealth in the village (see also Hoare 199). The trucks had been purchased on credit at a time when cabbage was reportedly fetching over 30 baht per kilo (Ja Thaw, personal interview). By 2002, the price had dropped to less than half of that in the region (Hau1 and von Oppen, 2004), and agriculture and community development officers at the SAO were receiving reports of 1-2 baht per kilo by the end of the decade (personal communication). In 2015, Ja Thaw reported that they were back up to 3-4 baht, which was barely enough to break even.

Falling prices resulted in substantial debt for Ban Musoe's biggest spenders, compounded by the high costs of the massive quantities of chemical fertilizers and pesticides required to keep the monocrop fields productive throughout the year (also see Kammerer 1989: 287). Adding further salt to the economic wounds, the unregulated and unprotected use of dangerous chemicals has been producing some rather terrible health effects. Ja Gaw showed me a picture of a cousin whose knee had swollen to the size of a basketball. Diagnosis: cancer. A standing joke at the SAO was that the Lahu of Ban Musoe would not even let their pigs eat the cabbage, fearing they would get sick and die immediately (whether they could really keep the pigs from doing this was questionable, as many piglets ran around the village freely). My wife and I were cautioned to never eat any Lahu cabbage unless we soaked it in water for at least 30 minutes first. And yet, anytime we passed by the Lahu cabbage fields on our way to a district meeting in Omkoi, any

head of cabbage that had fallen from a truck was snatched up and taken home by the driver. Highway foraging was a common practice for those that had their own vehicles.

Ban Musoe (called *Doi La Muang* by Jones' informants[128]) was founded around 1957 by a Lahu Na group of 65 families that had split off from a village near Doi Chang in Chiang Rai province (Jones 1967:143).[129] Jones describes the village a decade later:

> Until 1966, the village was extremely remote, but during the last part of 1965 a crude road was constructed from Omkoi to the site of the Lahu village on Doi La Muang. Although this village is remote in the sense that it is not located as close to Northern Thai villages as either Doi Mussuh [Tak] or Red Lake [Chiang Rai], it is located along a major trade route, 50 kilometers from Omkoi, between Omkoi, the district headquarters, and Mae Tuen, the other major northern Thai village in the district. Despite its physical remoteness prior to 1966, the village has never been remote in an economic or social sense. There has been a resident Chinese trader in the village with a store stocked with goods from Chiengmai for the last 10 years…There is, in addition, a small food shop. Although the villagers do not buy food there, it is designed to serve the people who get off the bus in the village to walk on to Mae Tuen.
>
> This village is to a great extent a trade center. The Chinese and Thai traders in the village receive goods which are distributed to the surrounding area, a major portion of the supplies continuing on to Mae Tuen (40 kilometers away) by pack horse. The surrounding Karen tribesmen collect bark, which is used in chewing betel, to exchange for money or goods. The Lahu themselves participate in this trade by using the traders as an outlet for their opium…(142-143)

A monk at Wat Jawm Mawk in Huay Mai Hok village (Monjong Sub-district) spearheaded the fundraising and construction efforts that paved the road from Omkoi to Mae Tuen in the 1990s, and while it did link up to the existing road from Omkoi to Ban Musoe, the Lahu village is now easily bypassed and not quite the trading post it once was. Now the highest point of the mountain ridge (rather than the village itself), with its sweeping panoramic views and cool blasts of wind, serves as a stopping point for travelers to get out, stretch their legs, and make cliché references to the "Switzerland" of Thailand.[130] An SAO-funded Buddhist monument and large golden gourd flank the road,[131] giving further reason to stop and take

pictures. Some enterprising villagers construct temporary shacks at the site to sell snacks and local products. The village itself is now easily missed by passing drivers, but it is not ignored by Thai forestry officials who still keep a suspicious eye on the Lahu, especially during the hot season (March-June) when burning of the forests is a common practice throughout the region. Tensions still remain high, and communication is still an issue, as many of the older Lahu villagers understand very little central Thai and only marginally more of the northern *Kham Mueang* dialect. The village also houses an elementary school, *anamai* (government-subsidized health center), and SAO-sponsored day care center. Contact with local authorities and administrators is common.

Tourism, Nature, and Music-Dance

A more recent trend that has brought more of the village population into contact with Thai lowlanders in the last decade has been seasonal adventure tourism. A few magazines and travel shows[132] have now begun catching wind of Doi Monjong's natural attractions, including the 1,300 meter elevation cold ("Switzerland"-inspired) weather, wild rhododendrons and orchids, and the site of Thailand's last surviving herd of wild elephants. As the local government office has been unwilling or unable to support tourist operations, Lahu villagers have taken it upon themselves to organize and operate tours to the mountain as a community enterprise. Former council member and former vice-mayor Ja Thaw, one of an estimated 50 owners of a four-wheel drive Toyota truck, boasts of the village's cooperative effort. Tourists (usually from Bangkok) come in the winter season to Ban Musoe and hire local Lahu guides (who operate on a rotating schedule agreed upon through the coordinating efforts of the *Phu Yai Ban*, the village headman in charge of managing liaisons with the district government), whose cabbage trucks now transport adventure-seekers to the base of the hike along dangerous, dusty mountainous

roads for a price.[133] Lahu guides can also be hired to carry all the gear (tents, sleeping bags, mats, water, food, etc…), which they pack into their iconic bamboo baskets normally used to transport cabbage or other mountain products (see Kammerer 1996). One of these overnight trips can bring in up to 3,000 baht of supplemental income into the community.[134] And around the campfires at night after the long hike up to the top of Doi Monjong and after the tourists have gone to bed, Lahu guides engage in excited chatter about the approaching New Year.

In his detailed description of the Lahu *Nyi* New Year, Andrew Walker asserts that the New Year is "by far the most important period in the annual ritual cycle of the Lahu *Nyi* village community" (1985: 36). Walker's work provides day-by-day details of nearly every aspect of the Lahu ritual setting, including playing games, sacrificing pigs, mixing and distributing food, reciting ritual texts, pounding sticky rice into cakes, making beeswax candles, shooting off fireworks, and building ceremonial trees. Dance gets some attention (13) and is frequently mentioned, but he does not use it (as he does all the other activities mentioned above) for his overall message of the New Year's function of village solidarity, inter-village solidarity, household harmony, gender equality, and spirit world connection (37-38). Indeed, Lahu dance and its social significance has received very little academic attention overall (Hill *et al* 2013: 20). In a later publication, Walker claims plenty of significance for the *symbolic* solidarity practiced by ritual acts of "mixed rice" (where each villager brings a handful of rice to a central container) and "mixed water" (where, again, each household brings one bamboo joint of water to pour into a central tank). In both instances of "mixing," the entire village is confirmed and visualized as one community, symbolically (1992: 394-5). The metaphor is pertinent, and potent, but a much more participatory and engaging event dominates the discussions of eager villagers awaiting the upcoming festivities. I propose that Lahu music-dance, the *ten ja khu*,[135] offers a glimpse into

enacted rather than *symbolic* Lahu unity.

Bring in the Fun: *Ja Khue* (Lahu Music-Dance)

The Lahu New Year is a multi-day event—Walker counted 11 days between the "Female" and "Male" New Years (1985: 34). The ritual aspect and surrounding activities, with the dance the most anticipated part, vary in Ban Musoe (this year it lasted for four days, though multiple date ranges were provided each time I inquired). Labor is forbidden for the entire month, and families have plenty of time to visit and bring gifts to their neighbors, neighboring villages, and more remote Lahu villages in other provinces (Tak and Chiang Rai). Communities also must plan the agricultural cycle accordingly and complete the cabbage harvest before the official start of the festivities and visitations. Ban Musoe, while categorized as one village under the Thai system, is actually a cluster of eight villages (about 20 families each), each marked off by and centered around their own ritual dance circle (Lahu: *ja khue kue*), a circular patch of hardened red dirt surrounded by a wooden fence. A ritualist leads the entire village (every family must be present) in daily offerings to the *guifu* (village guardian spirit), which also takes place in the dance circle.

Each of the (sub)villages in the officially recognized Ban Musoe area has such a center where daily pig slaughters, offerings, and dances are the norm, but the main attraction is the "big" New Year (Thai: *pi mai yai*), where these eight centers (each led by a ritualist) eventually coalesce around an even bigger center at the house of the "Great" ritualist (Thai: *Ajaan Yai*; Lahu: *To Bo Pa*).[136] This sacred center *attracts* (see Tambiah 1977; Anderson 1972) visitors drawn in by its pull, and each village comes prepared for a collaborative yet competitive participatory dance. Weeks are spent in preparation—sticky rice cakes are pounded in newly-made wooden mortars, women arrive in their newly sewn bright green and blue or black and

white jackets decorated with silver coins that sparkle and jangle as a visual and sonic testament of wealth, and the village as a whole has been practicing syncing up their dance steps in preparation. The big dance of Ban Musoe stretches for four days, with the opening and closing dances lasting all night (usually ending around 5am). The second and third days can end at midnight. Here, Csikszentmihalyi's description of a sporting event could just as easily portray the Lahu *ja khue* New Year dance:

> What makes these activities conducive to flow is that they were *designed* to make optimal experience easier to achieve. They have rules that require the learning of skills, they set up goals, they provide feedback, they make control possible. They facilitate concentration and involvement by making the activity as distinct as possible from the so-called 'paramount reality' of everyday existence. For example, in each sport participants dress up in eye-catching uniforms and enter special enclaves that set them apart temporarily from ordinary mortals. For the duration of the event, players and spectators cease to act in terms of common sense, and concentrate instead on the peculiar reality of the game. (1990: 71)

Every village group, including visiting Lisu troupes and Lahu communities from other provinces, arrive ready with their own music-dance (there is no universal or official Lahu dance or song), and the similarity across villages is enough to allow eventual participation and integration. In other words, the initial competitive display eventually morphs into pan-village solidarity and universal participation. Where Walker's village-level "mixed" rice and inter-village rice-cake deliveries present a symbolic unity, pan-village music-dance participation enables a participatory unity of movement and inclusive sentiment of "fun."

Virtually every villager I asked described the dance and New Year, first and foremost, as fun, which, in Thailand, is serious business, a means and an end in and of itself (Jonsson 2001; Wong 1998: 123; Mitchell 2011:480). Hill *et al* also include a commonly heard statement yelled from the sidelines where elders observe the young people dancing: *Ja khue chaw da!* [Dancing is fun!]. Ja Thaw and others also regularly used the northern Thai term for "fun" (*muan tae tae!*)

for various things, from driving through muddy banks to hauling 50 kilograms of cabbage on one's back to installing a refrigerator at a relative's roadside store. It operated as a gloss term, a label to slap on to any activity to ensure that smiles trumped complaint and enjoyment prevailed. When we drove out to Ban Musoe Nai during the rainy season, the truck was fitted with chains to ensure we did not slide off the muddy road and down a steep ravine. At one watershed basin, where the road was flooded and flooding away thanks to a seasonal creek-turned-mudslide, Ja Thaw's friends all jumped out of the back of the truck and gathered fallen logs to drag across the mud, laughing their way through the downpour. Ja Thaw asked me: "Ben, have you ever seen a bridge like this? So *thammachat* [natural]! So *muan tae tae*!" I was rubbing my aching back and nodded. He looked over at me. "Oh, does your back hurt? Well, at least it is *thammachat* pain! Totally different from urban pain! Right? *Muan Tae tae*!" Fun here is the goal; the process is as important or perhaps more so than the product. The *ja khue* dance works so well and imprints on Lahu memory so distinctly because of the sheer fun of it. This *cha daw*/*muan*/*sanuk* encourages participation and reflection in a feelingful way that Walker's "symbolic unity" through mixed rice just does not achieve. While "fun" is one way to translate *sanuk/muan*, it is also used as a verb (or a state-of-being verb), where it is operates as "to enjoy" or "to be enjoyable." This more directly squares with Csikszentmihalyi, who stresses that flow is not just a state of amusement or pleasure but of enjoyment. In his words, it takes focus and attention:

> We can experience pleasure without any investment of psychic energy, whereas enjoyment happens only as a result of unusual investments of attention. A person can feel pleasure without any effort…but it is impossible to enjoy a tennis game, a book, or a conversation unless attention is fully concentrated on the activity. (1990: 46).

The Thai/northern Thai (*sanuk/muan*) sentiment expressed here is thus more active, participatory. Enjoyment is a desired goal in and of itself that is intentionally labeled into

existence, as with the examples cited by the Lahu in these cases—what Csikszentmihalyi would call "autotelic experience" (67).

The dance itself is fairly accessible and repetitive, as is typical of participatory music traditions (Turino 2008: 37-43). Men form the outer circles, led by a free-reed gourd pipe (*naw*) player, and stomp loudly on accented beats, moving in a clockwise direction. Women form tight lines of 4-5 dancers and hold hands with crossed arms, stepping lightly on the accented beats while scuffing their feet on the upbeats in between (see Hill *et al* 2013 for labanotation of multiple dances). The overall effect is a hocket of sorts, with strong male stomps and high-pitched female brush steps filling each other's gaps. As the women step, the silver decorations sewed into their jackets and hats swing and jangle, increasing their sonic presence and reflecting the light (of the sun or fire, depending on the time of day). Step patterns are known already by the leading group and are learned easily enough through repetition (each song cycles through and repeats multiple times). Every step pattern is accompanied by a particular melody—again, to know the "music" is to know the "dance" (one cannot know "just the melody" as this would not account for the entire experience). Thus, "dance" and "music" are not distinguishable as separate entities here.[137] Indeed, when I asked whether the songs had titles, I was given the step pattern and instrument instead (*Naw Kile* pattern 4, *Naw Kuema* pattern 1, *Tue* pattern 5, etc…).

Each instrument also has a set repertoire they will play. The *naw kile*[138] (smaller, high pitched gourd pipe) has seven songs/step patterns while the *tue* (a fretless spike lute with python skin or plastic resonator and three strings made from untwisted motorcycle brake cable, tuned DO DO SO) plays five step-pattern-pieces. Ritual specialist *Ajaan* Ja Le demonstrated each of these patterns, including the male[139] stomp accents (marked with an X in the transcription below). A few examples are transcribed below to provide a general sense of the lilting rhythm

and choreographic relations (see appendix for the complete catalog).

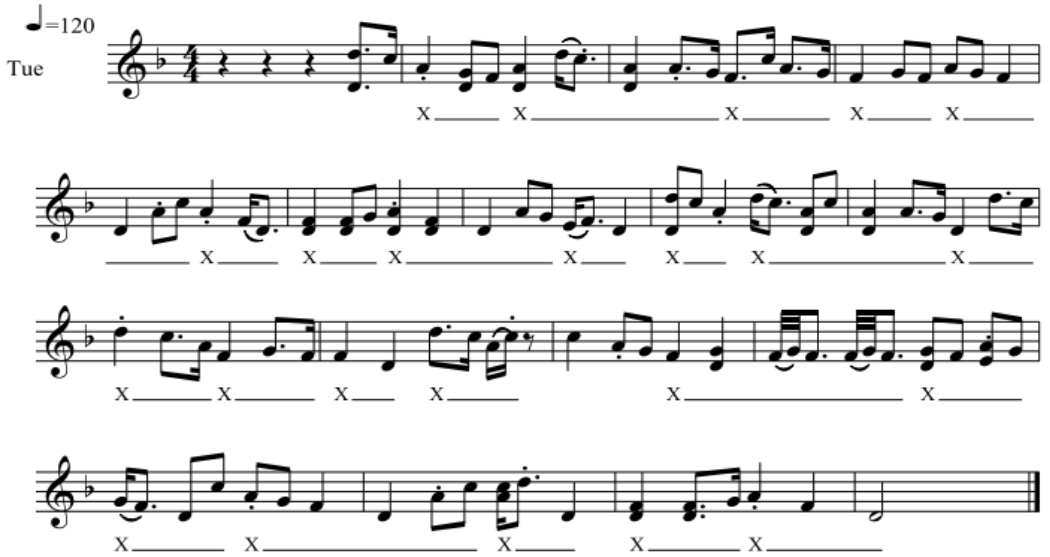


Figure 14: *Tue*[140] Step Pattern 2 [CD Track 22]

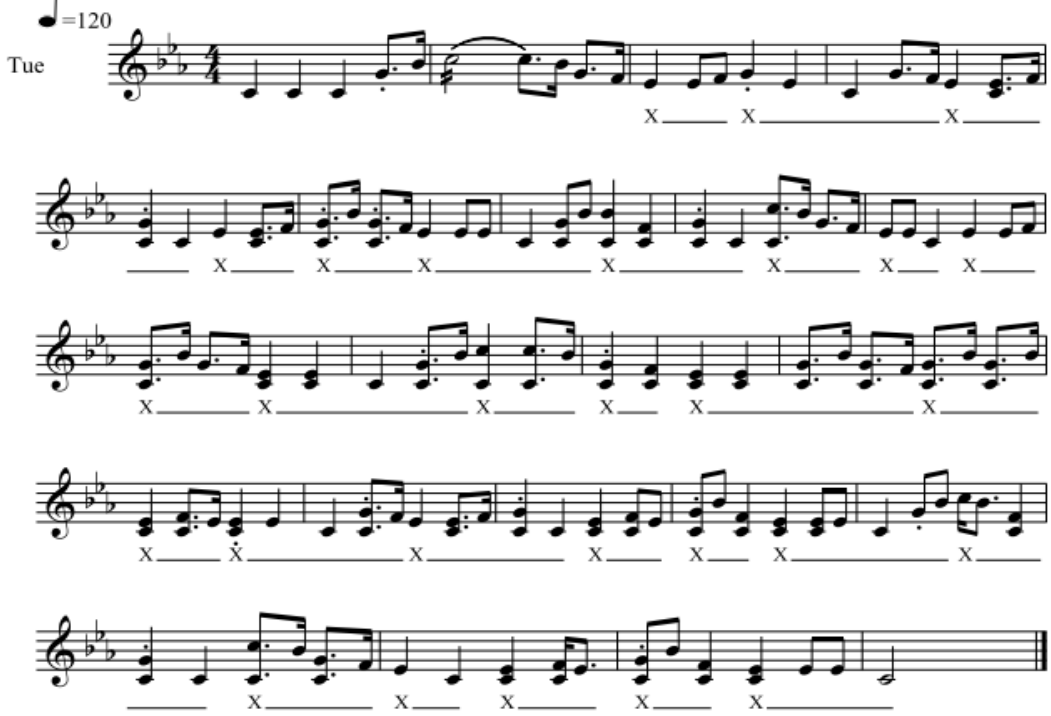


Figure 15: *Tue* Step Pattern 3 [CD Track 24]

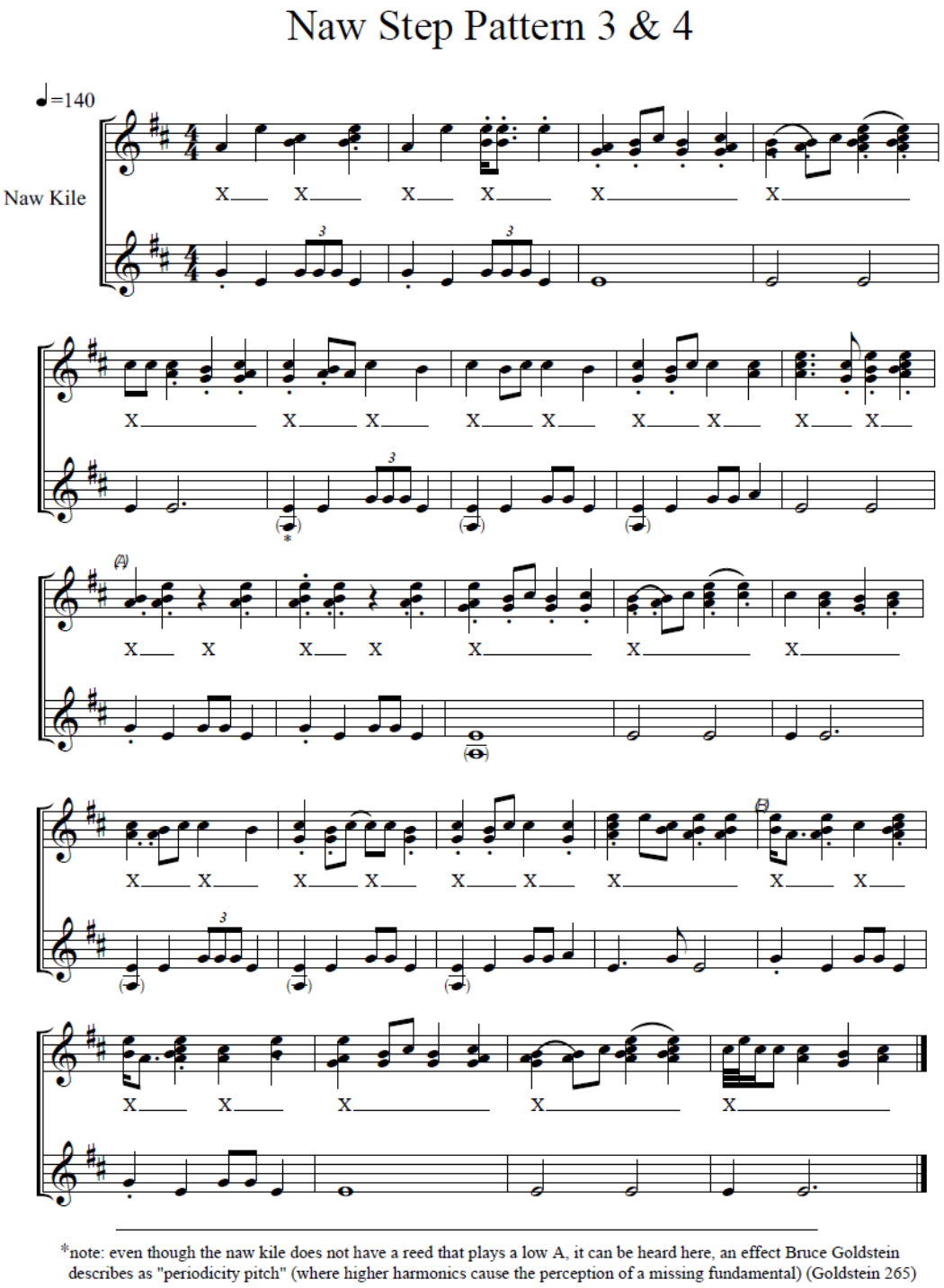


Figure 17: *Naw Kile*[141] Step Patterns 3 & 4. Ja Le combined these two in his performance. I have marked the beginning of the dance pattern here with (A) and (B). The 9-measure step pattern thus can be heard & seen as short-short-short-short-long-long-long-short-short-short-short-short-short-short-short. [CD Track 17]

Ja Thaw insists that the most fun aspect of the New Year festivities is that so many Lahu

are gathered together. No matter where they have relocated to, the great New Year calls them home (Personal interview). At the main *ajaan*'s house, all eight villages gather on the first day in Ban Musoe (also known as Musoe *nawk*, or "outer" Musoe). They are then joined by Lahu communities from other provinces. This community continues to swell, and together the reunited collective travels *en masse* along the seasonal dirt road to Musoe *nai* (the "inner" village), a satellite settlement deeper into the mountains, where the dancing continues. Dancers at this village will then return to Musoe *nawk* with the growing posse on the following day, where the final closing occurs with the largest gathering.[142]

Again, the "fun" of gathering at the center is the most talked about and most celebrated aspect of the event. By Turino's definition, this is participatory music, "a specialized type of artistic practice in which there are no artist-audience distinctions, only participants and potential participants performing different roles, and the primary goal is to involve the maximum number of people in some performance role" (2008: 26). Added to this is the circumambulatory feature common (but not exclusive) to Southeast Asian peoples—the orbital draw of the New Year dancing operates as a statement of identity and powerful centripetality. Ja Thaw and other community leaders adamantly insist that other Lahu villages in other provinces do not practice Lahu culture to the same degree as Ban Musoe in Omkoi does. In his mind, this is why everyone comes here for the New Year. Many are young Lahu people that have left their villages to go off to school in Thai urban spaces, and thus they are not confident in their dancing; they come here to learn and reestablish links to a traditional cultural practice through communal movement and participation. Yet they are not the only ones in attendance.

The Other, the We-self, and the New Year Dance

"Ben, do you want to see the *ja khue* new year dance?" Ja Thaw asks me.

"Of course, but it doesn't start till tomorrow, right?" I respond.

I followed a smiling Ja Thaw down to his cousin's house, where a DVD player sat atop a 20-inch screen TV. We watched last year's dance in Ban Musoe *Nai* for an hour as he made remarks about how fun it was then. I asked who filmed this.

> Thai people! Many are from cities, from Bangkok. Tourists are actually very interested in our way of life nowadays. It wasn't always like this, but now they want to come and see these ancient customs, the culture and traditions of a bygone era. Maybe they feel they have lost their traditions and exchanged them for modernity, but we still keep our culture here, and we see its value. So they come, they take pictures, and they make video recordings of our traditions. They can join the dance, too. Everyone is welcome. Except drunks. No drinking or fighting is allowed here during this time. This would displease *Guisha* and compromise our hopes for a good year. [CD track15]

Ja Thaw's comments here demonstrate local perceptions and Thai attitudes toward the Lahu New Year. This is not a show for tourists; the Lahu of Ban Musoe are not playing up their ethnic minority status primarily for an external crowd or making explicit arguments about human rights or lowland abuse, as are activists Chi Suwichan (last chapter) or Aju Jupoh (next chapter). But their musical presentation of self does now conveniently fit well with Thai romantic desires for eco- and ethno- authenticity (Johnson 2014: 104-105), and the Lahu of Ban Musoe are obligingly aware of this. While they do not stage their culture for external lowland consumption as did, for example, the *Naxi* of Yunnan (Reese 2000), they are aware of the shift in perspective occurring amongst lowland Thais and see that a "preserved tradition" holds potential to move the stereotype past the opium-growing/forest-destroying label of the 20th century. As Anthony Seeger notes regarding the musical performances of the Kiriri of Brazil, "The mobilization of a given identity is often related to a wider political and legal framework" (12). Here, the role of the singing-dancing minority is not performed primarily for or aimed at lowland consumption, but it is not unrelated to experiences with their downhill neighbors.[143] The Lahu are aware that

members of the national majority are looking in on their performance and enjoying it for aesthetics, but this is secondary to its role in solidifying ethnic community, tradition, and custom. In this way, the nation is peripheral yet still integral and useful—for example, visiting Lisu participants, lowland tourists, and one ethnomusicologist all converse with Lahu hosts in a shared national language: Thai. Printed flyers and social media announcing the event also employ this national medium and language.[144]

Figure 18: Ajaan Ja Le's daughter, a teacher at the local elementary school, and her circle of friends act as the *de facto* social media public relations managers and promoters of the *ten ja khue* events. Traditional means of promotion and publicization are aided and expanded with the use of facebook (Ja Thaw was actually the one who donated some land so that a cell tower could be placed near the summit here, ensuring that residents had 3G access).

Pictured here are drying rice cakes (to be delivered to neighbors shortly) and female dancers in their best costumes. The text in the post informs all that everything has been purchased and the celebration has been prepared. All who are available are invited to come view the beautiful, traditional rituals and Lahu cultural activities during the dates listed.

With the "distance-demolishing technologies" (Scott 2009: xii) of roads, radios, land titles, and other official paraphernalia, the Thai nation-state has made inroads into this mountain community, and many the oft-reported issues with national assimilation and hill-tribe stigma have been experienced, felt, or imagined by members of Ban Musoe and other Lahu communities (Kalaitzi 2015; Chayan 2005; Nishimoto 2015). Some villagers have moved downhill or sent their children away to the cities and many do attempt lowland lifestyles with wealth on display here as in other Lahu village landscapes (Hoare 199), yet there is more to the picture painted of villages in the many ethnographies of Lahu communities perched on the edge and perpetually tilting (via a vaguely alarmist ethnographic present) toward sweeping change and modern enclosure (Walker *et al* 1992; Nishimoto 2015; Hill *et al* 2013; Jones 1971). Jones' seminal work, though, foregrounded the non-isolated character of Lahu existence in Thailand that was marked by interethnic exchange (1967: 3-5). That Ban Musoe today is more integrated into the national infrastructure allows for increased visibility of what is imagined by village leaders to be a final bastion of Lahu culture still present in the hills to which scattered children and young adults can come to learn, participate in, and broadcast to others via social media utilizing Thai script (icons of global modernity and national integration). Their firm belief in the authenticity of the New Year dance as a vehicle of cultural perpetuation is strengthened by national encroachment, paralleling other Asian and Southeast Asian minority communities' experiences (i.e., Ishikawa 2010: 156; Gladney 2004: 159), but they do not advocate for an explicit rejection or dismissal of all external ideas as tainted. While opium production and swiddening agricultural techniques have largely been abandoned, this is not a complete acquiescence to the nation's every demand but rather an inward turn toward the ethnic we-self that incorporates mechanisms of the state (language, media) to reframe a continuing practice.

Ultimately, the nation-state matters *explicitly* in that ethnic identity was and is forged in difference and legacies of policy (see Keyes 2003: 210; Salemink 1991: 244), it matters *implicitly* as it provides a set of more-or-less "neutral" (or at least malleable) communicative tools appropriated for localized use and allowing greater organization and cooperation (i.e., Anthony Smith's "pasts" [1997] are not the only "usable" items here; also see Bohlman 1989), and it also, in a sense, matters *very little* as the New Year festival is a site of we-self construction and consumption that claims a historicized tradition spanning back to at least the "tributary period" of a pre-national era (see Tooker's discussion of Jonsson, 2012: 49-55). The nation's only relevance for this last point is in the tools it provides to enable a greater scope (promotion, communication, transportation, mediacization), and these outward-focused activities are not aimed at drawing in non-Lahu, though that may be part of the result. Rather, the aim is ethnic consolidation for the purposes of community and fun. Music-dance, then, is both non-threatening and unthreatened, and serves as a participatory act of ethnic consolidation under an encouraging, if not romanticizing, national eye. Steven Feld (1994) and Thomas Turino (2008) offer some insights on how and why Lahu music-dance can be seen as operating as it does here.

Dancing, Grooving, and Participating in Lahuness

Feld describes the Kaluli notion of grooving, infused by a social value *dulugu ganalan*, or "Lift-up-over-sounding" (109), which employs metaphor and extra-sonic sensory attributions to enhance and extend the understanding of sonic and social relations (132). The Kaluli practice demonstrates that musical and feelingful participation *is* social identity formation—a distinctive Kaluli musical style accomplishes a social ideal of maximum participation (146). He, along with Charles Keil, argues for an integrated performance practice that seeks to blur the dichotomies of process-product, embodied-engendered, music-dance, and other binaries, where, ultimately, a

recurrent metaphor strengthens into a metonym, or icon (132, 146). Feld concludes by condensing style and participation, saying styles are

> the very human resources that are enacted to constitute the reality of social life in sound. Style itself is the accomplishment, the crystallization of personal and social participation; it is the way performance and engagement endows humanly meaningful shape upon sonic form… (149)

This notion of moving from metaphor as disconnected abstraction and into a felt iconic wholeness[145] speaks directly to Andrew Walker's description of Lahu great merit day ceremonies. As mentioned, for Walker, the collective individual contributions to a basket of "mixed rice" or a tank of "mixed water" *symbolized* village unity (1992: 394-5; Also Schworer-Kohl 1990: 148). He glosses over the *ja khue* music-dance with a quick note, but I submit that it clearly acts as a social location of enacted, embodied, iconic identity and wholeness through the process of felt participation (what Keil and Feld would describe as "groove"). In other words, the social process of mixing rice and water might possibly be pushed abstractly into iconicity with some effort and discussion, but the very active participatory musical engagement that is *ja khue* offers an especially tangible scene of ethnic solidarity in practice. This is made even more urgent for identity purposes by the Lahu elder's maxim: "Dance, or change your religion" (Hill, Saenghong, Grim-Feinberg 2011). While rice and water are metaphoric, music-dance becomes metanymnically Lahu. For Lahu *Na* communities, dance is a necessary aspect of religious myth and participation (Jones 1964: 87-88), and, for the Lahu as with most other highlander communities in the region, religious practice has been closely tied to ethnic identity (Nishimoto 2015; Reid 2010: 33; Hayami 2004: 2-3; Keyes 1996; Kammerer 1996; Tapp 1989). If religious change is seen in many respects as ethnic change (i.e., Platz 2003: 481; Reid 28), the refusal to dance as well as the admonition to do so can be read as agentic ethnic statement (i.e., the

distancing described in the previous chapter).

My scope and interest here is not so much in some Christian converts who no longer dance (see Jones' description of Hweitad village 1964: 157) as it is in the process of Lahu of Ban Musoe who continue to dance and see it as important. Feld talks about *feeling* as the process that "makes ours" that which has been distanced by objectification or abstraction.[146] Thus, the participatory nature of Lahu *ja khue* "makes theirs" the abstract ethnic notion of identity that can elsewhere be experienced merely as symbolic abstraction (Schworer-Kohl 1990: 148; Walker 1984: 279). Dancing is a much more feelingful way to experience and express unity compared to mixing water and rice into a communal bin—every person I talked with in Ban Musoe expressed excitement for the dance while the other aspects of the New Year were mostly ignored or breezed past (a complete inversion of Walker's emphasis on object with dance as footnote). The act of dancing, of moving, is as memorable as it is constructive. The Lahu are a people defined by action: Walker and Schworer-Kohl note that the Lahu refer to themselves as "the candle burners" (*pehˇ tuˆ paˍ*) due to the omnipresence of beeswax candles and their integration into Lahu ritual (Walker 1985: 6; Schworer-Kohl 1990:152). I submit (and I believe Ja Thaw and other community leaders have implied here) that the Lahu of Ban Musoe, and those drawn in to participate from beyond the district, are identified as Lahu because they dance—and not in a staged or commodified (externally-labeled) sense but in a participatory (internal we-self) one. As Martin Stokes notes for some cases, "music and dance are the only means by which the wider community appears as such to itself" (12). The Lahu community is here enacted within the participatory act of music-dance and its ritual, communal, and ethno-generative capabilities.

CHAPTER 5: State Evasion or Invasion? Akha Space and Participatory Music

This chapter explores the glossing qualities of participatory music, showing how the same distance-destroying technologies shift from demonized other to appropriated tool to unquestioned presence through the process of feelingful participation. Here, the self and other are paradoxically lost and wed to the collective while participants enter a state of flow. Csikszentmihalyi surmises that participants in a flow state have neither the need nor the mental capacity to reflect on the self, on worries, on outside duties, or on anything other than the task one is fully and presently engaged with (54, 62). This prioritizing of human psychology over cultural specificity has implications for an ethnic we-self in relation to lowland and national aesthetic symbols employed in participatory music making.

The road map for this chapter is literally a road trip: internationally-renowned Akha musican-activist Aju Jupoh takes us on a tour of Akha modern history that starts in lowland Chiang Rai, ascends to the top of Doi Tung mountain, crosses the border into Burma, and comes back down to the urban and modern home base. Along the way, a contentious history with Thai authorities and later movements to preserve and redefine Akha identity through NGOs, education, and media are mapped out, and a musical engagement shows how Thai genres and technologies gain presence in Akha campaigns of self-determination. In the car and in public lectures, Aju discusses the *dehaw* (traditional village dancing space) and the intrusions of Thai and western musical genres, scholars, and aesthetics. Each of these can be appropriated, reframed, and localized, but their qualities and presence can also be masked and taken for granted as participation trumps self-reflection and critical engagement. I transcribe and analyze songs on Aju's album that achieved near-anthem status for the dispersed Akha to show these processes at work.

Figure 19: map from www.thaiticketmajor.com. A typical circle tour offered by tour guides in Chiang Rai.

Introduction

Jones' conclusion after comparing six Lahu villages in northern Thailand (1967) was that their customary means of subsistence—insufficient rice production bolstered by opium cash crops—was becoming less and less viable as the Thai state and the modern world encroached. Thus, what anthropologists at that time understood and labeled as "traditional" highlander culture was on the verge of extinction as the final frontier was being invaded by state infrastructure and forestry policy.[147] The standard (and not unsubstantiated) language of activists and NGOs in northern Thailand is one of a disappearing space in which tradition bearers must struggle to continue on: once-isolated forests are now managed by the state and the indigenous Karen are labeled illegal squatters (Buergin 2003), the "extensive and expensive" demands of animist ritual requires more land and livestock than Akha had access to as state-imposed titles and deeds reduced communal property (Kammerer 1990), Christian missionization (Protestantism in particular) affects village structure as much as it impacts ethnic identity or

agricultural practice (Tapp 1989: 82-86; Li 2012), state resettlement and forest conservation plans for Akha in Laos amount to a state-framed, weapon-free "everyday violence"[148] exacted upon highlanders (Cohen & Lyttleton 118). In these narratives, the former and time-tested method of retreat further up and away is no longer an option (Goodman 86).

These dire and urgent situations led Jones to predict, for the Lahu at least, that encroaching Thai governance and the restricting of opium in particular would be the Lahu's undoing. In Jones' words, "They know that eventually force will be applied to stop the growing of opium and the cutting of the forest. The outcome of this will *probably be that the villagers will return to Burma* to live" (1967:86, emphasis mine). These kinds of predictions do not give enough credit to the adaptive and creative energies that the same scholars laud in these groups known for fluidity, flexibility, and modularity (Scott 2009; Tooker 2004).

Jones' statement was actually half correct, though, but just not in the way he imagined: unable to grow food via swiddening practice due to Thai restrictions on national forests, some Akha communities in Doi Tung (Chiang Rai) *have* returned to Burma. Or, more accurately, they *do* return. But not to live. Rather, they appropriate national spaces, frontier zones, and exploit the areas beyond the reach of state law in unexpected and clever ways, bypassing the state and proving that evasion is still possible, even from within the "final" enclosure of the frontier.

A Road Trip with Aju Jupoh

Aju's childhood and his community's history of encounters with the state and with outsiders inform his current status. Aju was born in Saen Charoen, one of the first Akha villages in Chiang Rai that pledged loyalty to Thailand by establishing itself below the 1,000 meter mark—thus rendering residents unable to produce opium (Goodman 91). Aju is an internationally-known Akha musician and former director of AFECT (the association for Akha

Education and Culture in Thailand) NGO, one of the first Akha-run and Akha-focused NGOs in Thailand (Geusau 2001:90; Tooker 2004: 274). He has worked with nearly every major foreign anthropologist or NGO worker focusing on the Akha (Andrew Turton, Paul Lewis, Deborah Tooker, and others), as his studies in London in the mid-1980s have given him an excellent command of English and a good sense of how to deal with international agencies and expectations. He has presented at several UNESCO conferences on the educational status of Akha in Thailand (Guttman 26) and was featured as a distinguished performer at all of the initial international Akha Studies conferences (SEAMP 1996). He works as a freelance consultant on various media projects from documenting Akha rituals to teaching Akha youth video and audio editing skills to writing proposals and budgets for internationally-funded NGO projects. An Akha network of international communication has arisen in large part due to his efforts: he was on the transnational committee for a meeting that resulted in the production of an Akha Romanized script (independent of the Christian script created by missionary-anthropologist couple Paul and Elaine Lewis) now used by Akha groups across China, Laos, Vietnam, Burma, and Thailand.[149] The script became instrumental in documenting and communicating ideas on Akha livelihood, customs, and genealogies,[150] and Aju learned web and video editing specifically for these purposes of linking and strengthening a larger imagined Akha community via media technology (print, radio, internet, and especially music, as he wrote *the* album of Akha music that spread internationally as an anthem of sorts. I discuss this later).

Aju's childhood demonstrates many of the feelings and experiences typical to Akha as they encountered incoming Thai assimilation programs and governing policies. At six years old, Aju spoke no Thai whatsoever but was sent "downhill" hours away from his family and village to study at a Buddhist temple, where nobody informed him that he was to bring his own spoon to

meals. The young boy showed up empty-handed, and the strict Thai monks refused to allow him to eat. Aju claims he nearly starved to death. He endured this situation, away from his family, until 12, when his father (an Akha spiritual leader and traditionalist) asked missionary Paul Lewis to let Aju come study at the missionary school in the village (even though the family was decidedly against conversion). Aju thus was and is intimately familiar with the multiple powers at work in reshaping the Akha village and consciousness in the late 20th century. These are exemplified and still very much on his mind as he takes me through Doi Tung to see what has become of the oldest Akha settlement in Thailand.

Doi Tung is now the site of a Royal Project, which lays out its origins as follows:

> In 1986, the head of the 31st Watershed Conservation Unit of the Royal Forest Department requested the Foundation to help solve the problems of deforestation and prevent the local people, who were struggling for survival, from encroaching [on] the remaining watershed forests of Doi Tung.
>
> Mom Rajawongse Disnadda Diskul, then Principle Private Secretary to the Princess Mother, was also searching for a location for HRH to reside in Thailand rather than having to travel to Switzerland when she was approaching ninety years old. He found that the climate in Doi Tung was suitable for her health. Upon hearing this report, the Princess Mother and Her Royal Highness Princess Galyani Vadhana paid a visit to Doi Tung and decided to build a home there so that she can devote her time to reforestation and development projects in Doi Tung. During that first visit, the Princess Mother stated that "I will reforest Doi Tung."
>
> The Doi Tung Development Project is a holistic and integrated sustainable alternative livelihood development initiative. It is the culmination of the Princess Mother's lifelong dedication to development work. [151,152]

Aju summarized it a little differently, saying, “When I was born here, there were thousands of Akha people and not a lot of trees. Now there are hardly any Akha people and thousands of trees” (personal interview). After 20 years of the royal project, the forested area of Doi Tung had increased from 45 to 80 percent (Mogg 10). Abundance is measured in trees.

Doi Tung was the site of the earliest Akha settlements in Thailand, offering a potential

place where the Akha could finally live in peace after decades of being caught in the middle of conflicts in China (Sino-French War in 1884 and KMT/PRC conflicts in 1951), Burma (British annexation 1886 and later Shan/Burmese disputes in the 1950s-60s), and cross-border opium trades (Goodman 28-30).[153] Aju's family came in the first of three waves of Akha migration starting around the turn of the 20th century, meaning that he was born in Chiang Rai and was eligible to register as a Thai citizen.[154]

The Akha community of Doi Tung engaged, undisturbed by lowland Thai officials, in typical agricultural practices—swiddening with some opium production but not nearly as much as the Lahu—until the mid-1980s, when the Royal Forestry Department began to give increasing attention to deforestation and the drug trade. Similar to Buergin's observations on the Karen in newly declared Thung Yai Naresuan national park (2003), the logic and discourse of environmental preservation preceded and pre-emptively justified a campaign of village eradication and consolidation, where "conservation" on paper played out as "eviction" on the ground. Agricultural land became less and less available, and swidden fields could not be sustainably harvested year after year. Goodman summarizes, "In overpopulated areas, Doi Tung for example, [Thais] forbade [swidden] rice cultivation and instead gave the Akhas employment on reforestation projects or fruit orchards so they would have the cash to buy rice from the plains" (93). Forsyth and Walker paint a less-benevolent picture by pointing to varied accounts of forced eviction and contentions between Akha dwellers and state officials:

> In the late 1980s and early 1990s, villages in Chiang Rai provinces were reportedly burned and their inhabitants deported to Burma…According to these reports, in 1987, trucks appeared at Akha and Lahu villages near the outskirts of the Doi Tung reforestation project, and the border patrol forcibly loaded some 160 families onto vehicles. In 1991, the burning of an Akha village near Doi Mae Salong was also reported. Both of these cases were claimed to be responses to illegal immigration into Thailand. In 2005, the land of three Akha villages was

> also allegedly seized and farmers imprisoned for cultivating fields. This was to make way for a Highland Development Station operated by the Thai Army and the Royal Forestry Department…(48)

We stopped at the royal project visitor's center atop Doi Tung. A large "Inspiration Hall" advertised the history and mission of the center:

> To ensure that the people of Doi Tung are economically self-reliant and able to continue the process of their own development as responsible citizens, amid an ever-evolving globalised world, without compromising the environment or their own cultural values.

Aju walked over and stood by a sign banning entry to the *Mae Fa Luang* gardens (unless we paid the fee). We peered over and looked down at the immaculately manicured garden plots.

"Pretty, isn't it, Ben?"

It really was. I nodded in response.

"That spot over there is where my house was. I was born right there. Today I must pay a fee if I want to go in."

So what happened to all these people and villages? Aju pointed out the one we had just driven past, Ban Pa Kha (a Christian village that "doesn't have culture"[155]). This was one of the few remaining villages after 30 years of reforestation and development. Thais came in to manage the "hill tribe problem" (Kwanchewan 375; Kammer 1989: 282-3), preventing new swiddens from being created and "retraining" the Akha in more sedentary endeavors. After three years of planting on the same fields, they were depleted and thus required increasing chemical fertilizer inputs (also see Anan 1998: 76-77). Soon after this, Akha were once again criticized for destroying Thai land (or, Thailand), this time with chemicals—again, they needed to be retrained and make the switch to organic production. Many got tired of constantly being blamed for the destruction of the forest, for not doing things correctly, for fueling the drug trade, for being

uneducated. Eventually, Aju says, most just left Doi Tung, going down the hill.

Our tour of the mountain ridge included one final stop. Aju had some friends he wanted us to meet. The nicely paved roads by the royal project gave way to a gravelly, narrow road that snaked along a mountain ridge off of the main highway. On the right side of the road, towering pine trees blocked the view of the Thai lowlands; on the left side, the hillsides were checkered patches of forest interspersed with green and brown treeless slopes.

"You see that, Ben? That's Burma. The Shan state."

It was a political border marked by a rather striking geography: green misty forests of Thailand in one watershed and grassy slopes dotted with burnt stumps in Burma. In the middle of the bare hillside stood a bamboo hut with a thatched roof.

"That's my friend's field. Let me pull over here."

Aju took two steps, and, just like that, he was in Burma. I hesitated.

"It's okay, Ben. This is the *Shan* state. The Burmese don't really have any say here. Neither do the Thai."

I took in the scene and realized that Tooker's notion of Akha "spatialization" (2012) was fully at work, employed in a new and unexpected way. She concludes her study on Akha uses of space—a technology employed to mark out insider and outsiders both within and beyond the village community— that spatialization is an active discursive process, a hierarchical ordering of life and place acknowledging and distancing centers from peripheries, safe zones from draining spiritual spaces, and the we-self from the dangerous lowland other. She notes, "spatial practices enabled the Akha to maintain and reproduce cultural autonomy in an historically migratory, multi-ethnic context of uneven power relationships" (242). Where others predicted and lamented the final enclosures of the highland frontier, arguing that the 19th century flight option was no

longer a possibility for groups such as the Akha, I was looking at a 21st century Akha frontier in front of me.

A Lahu and an Akha woman sat in the field hut cooking fish and green beans over an open fire. I inquired about the fields. "These? Yeah, they are ours: we planted them."[156] They smiled and showed me their Thai ID cards. They lived in a "development village" just on the other side of the Thai border, where they were not allowed to engage in this type of agriculture—their husbands were employed at a royal forestry project. "In Thailand, I can't be Akha,[157] but here I can do whatever I want. This is not Thai land." She pointed to the hillside, nearly devoid of trees but full of twisting green bean vines, pumpkins, and other seedlings I could not make out. This was a repurposing of space: in the traditional Akha village, a gate marked the border between a zone of protection and security and the evil and draining forces of the outside world. Every Akha village had to have, in addition to the iconic swing and courting grounds, a gate (Tooker 2012: 78; Goodman 4). Here, the national border was effectively being employed as taboo line that only these Akha could cross. On the Thai side there was political security, the village. On the Burmese side was the field, beyond the jurisdiction of Thai authorities and forestry policies, that allowed these Akha and Lahu to engage in traditional (agri)cultural practice. Added to this was Aju's international savvy, where he linked traditional practice with cosmopolitan sensibilities, saying, "See this pumpkin, Ben? It's organic! We didn't use any chemicals or pesticides to grow this! It's healthier."

Spatialization is thus Akha appropriation of tools and situations at their disposal. Thai encroachments can be turned around and repurposed. This applies not just to agricultural practice but also to ethnic, religious, and musical introductions.

Dance Circles and NGO Rock Bands

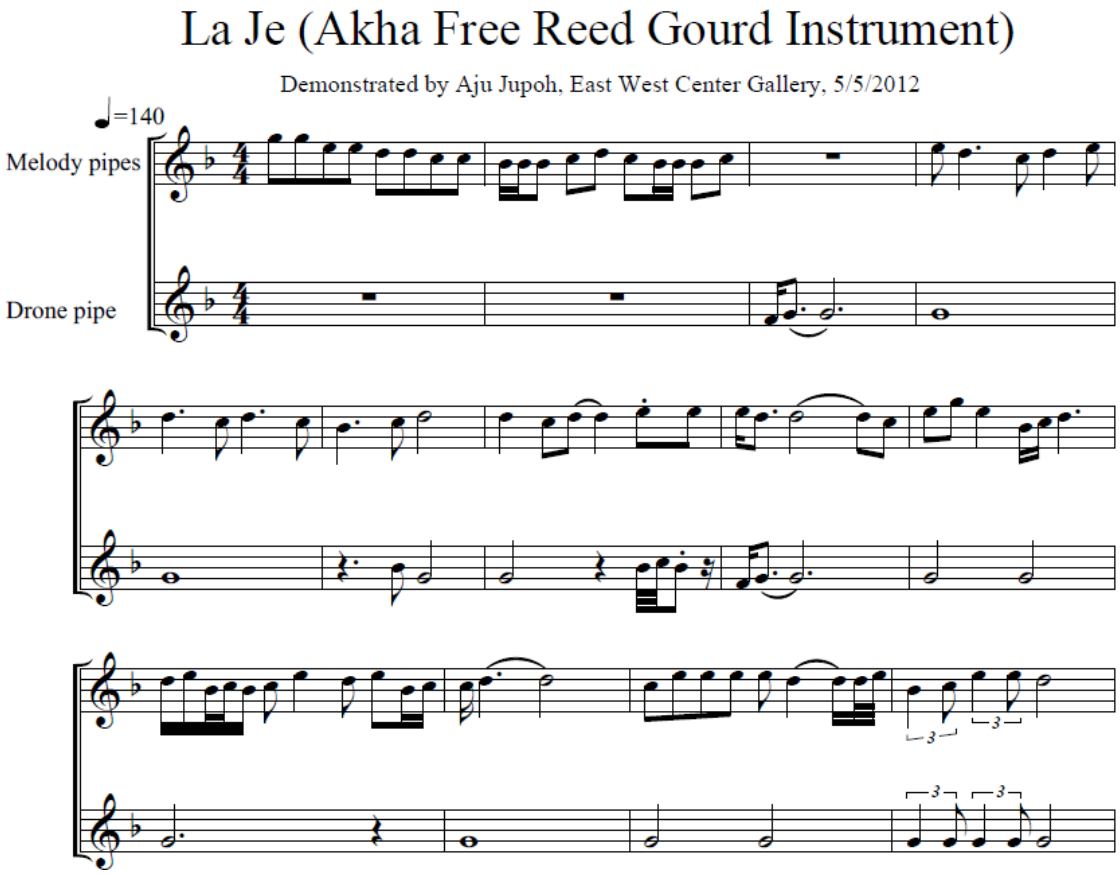
This frontier mentality and reapplied Akha spatialization as a means of finding creative repurposing methods to continue Akha evasion of the state's draining grip is present in Akha musical expression and participation as well. One of the most celebrated and participatory spaces for Akha music is the village dancing circle, the *de haw*. Before the introduction of TV, radio, and other technology into Akha communities made possible by electricity and the paved roads that brought it, villagers gathered regularly at the *de haw* after coming in from the fields to engage in antiphonal music and dance that taught Ahka people history and culture lessons (Aju Jupoh, public lecture). Sometimes these events were mandated, as a means of encouraging courtship, by the village ritualist (*dzo ma*), who was in charge of ensuring fertility for the community (animal, agricultural, and human) (Tooker 2012: 87).

Detailed *musicological* descriptions of the dance-music activities of the *de haw* are mostly absent from the literature, but some anthropologists have made some general notes. The primary instrument is the *La Je*, a set of five free-reed bamboo tubes inserted into a gourd (nearly identical to the Lahu *naw kile* featured in the previous chapter), that accompanied antiphonal dance-recitations of stories (Aju, public lecture) [CD Track 28]. Goodman's depiction of the *de haw* activities describes a picture where incorporation of foreign elements—including an Akha version of "The East is Red" (19) — is the norm:

> It's easy to tell the Thai songs from the Akha ones. The former are measured, upbeat numbers accompanied by vigorous drumming and pop-style dancing. Akhas often start with these, releasing a burst of energy that sets the mood of the evening. But then one of the older girls organizes several of her age set into a circle, they clasp hands and begin one of those lugubrious love songs so dear to an Akha's heart. The lead singer begins, the others follow up a few syllables behind, the circle curtseys at intervals and, on the refrain moves in patterned steps to its right. Then they all stop and the lead girl starts the next verse…Besides love ballads, there are fieldwork tunes, risqué numbers about sexual encounters, songs

> expressing love for their native village, and 'blues' numbers about being mired in poverty in the presence of rich neighbors…there's always someone who remembers one more, who briefly tries teaching it to the others so they can sing in unison, or else just sings out while the others follow a few syllables behind. And while this formal activity takes place at the center, the fringes are alive with mock courtship and rambunctious children. (18-19)

Here, as with the Lahu New Year dance, the *de haw* operates as a space for gathering. Tooker notes that "circumambulation is the collection of the totality" (2012: 112), and the gathering effect of participatory music, here with the inclusion of lyrics, offers a space for communal expression. The "whole" is created at the center (2012: 96), and the circle draws in community members from the entire village (Aju, public lecture). The music traditionally used, led by the *la je*, has many similarities (musically and visually) with the Lahu free reed *naw kile*. Aju gave brief demonstrations of its sound at the East-West Center talk:



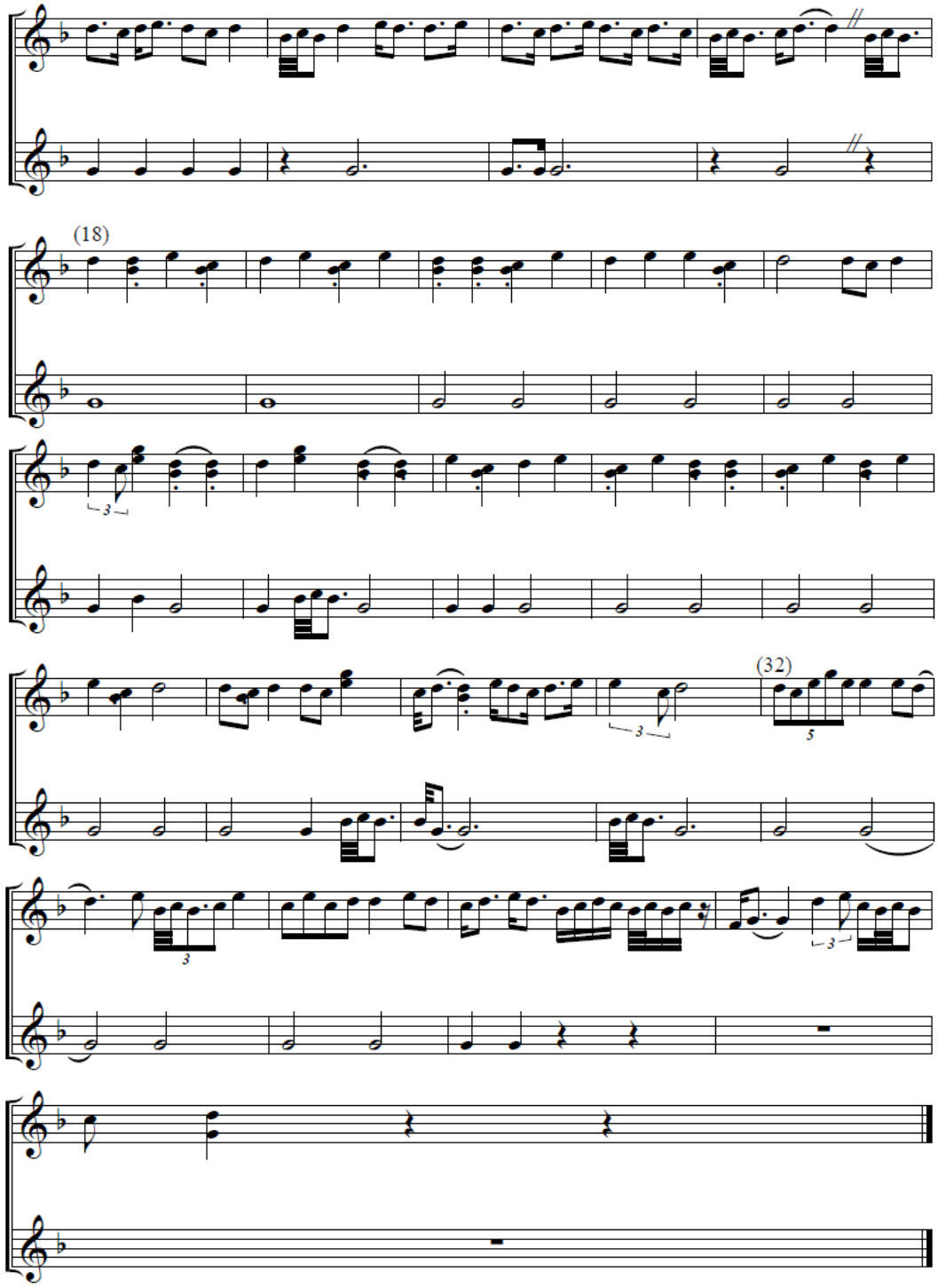


Figure 20: Transcription of Akha *La Je* (Free-reed gourd pipe) dance music, as demonstrated by Aju Jupoh at the East-West Center Gallery. 17 bar intro before regular dance begins at m.18. Winds down at m.32. [CD Track 28]

The "traditional" dance setting was and is very formative and informative of Akha identity, and its ethnic-pedagogical importance certainly fits in with NGO activist campaigns to

preserve, document, and perpetuate Akha identity, as it is a site for learning and reciting Akha ancestry and custom (Li 2012; Alting von Geusau 2001).[158] But as the holistic "Akha Way" becomes too "extensive and expensive" (Kammerer 1990) and is challenged by encroaching lowland and globalizing forces, newly educated younger generations are adopting a more compartmentalized or "modular" identity (Tooker 2004) where aspects of Akha-ness are packaged and presented only at special occasions. Tooker draws attention to the stages that now separate audience from presenters at Akha ceremonies where previously all had participated on the dancing grounds (2004: 274). This newly-emergent and performable ethnicity (presentational rather than participatory) is largely tied to indigenous lowland NGOs that have sprouted up since the 1990s, and they were heavily involved in a new wave of Akha music, for which Aju was the primary actor. Tooker describes AFECT (Akha Association for Education in Thailand) as taking the lead here:

> AFECT conducts the writing down of Akha oral texts and as well has created an Akha rock band that sings in the Akha language (although with a mix of Western, Thai, and Akha style music). This group takes as part of its task the conscious selective construction of Akha identity through both practices and concepts (calls itself the 'new' traditionalists), and tends to define that identity in a compartmentalized and exclusionary manner. (274)

The AFECT rock band even worked to create a new, staged tradition to "'ensure it would not die out'" (275). Alting von Geusau also points to the AFECT band as seminal to Akha Neo-traditionalism, noting, "these 'tribal' NGOs have also developed their own traditional dance groups or bands. The AFECT Akha band in Chiang Rai was able to support itself by the production and sale of Akha music tapes. The Akha radio programs encourage the revitalization of traditional songs" (2001: 9). The radio broadcasts in question were daily two-hour broadcasts from Chiang Mai (later reduced to one-hour), a feed that could be and was accessed by Akha

living in Laos, Burma, and China. Manu Luksch's documentary film *Virtual Borders* covers this process in great deal, and it suggests, in agreement with many of Aju's public statements, that media (once a tool under state control) is being put to use to form and transform international Akha collectives in new ways. Central to this cause is music, paired with a growing Akha consciousness and accompanied by Neo-traditionalist ideas of "re-conversion" back to the *Akhazang* (Akha Way) (Li 2012: 122). This trans-nationally organized non-governmental group of engaged Akha formalized a new Akha Romanized script in 2008, have organized numerous international cooperative meetings, and sponsor educational grants to raise up a new generation of civic-minded Akha activists (Alting von Geusau 2001:89-90). From the beginning and at the center of this NGO-sponsored, radio and cassette-enabled message of ethnic re-engagement is Aju Jupoh's anthem-like music[159], which is itself rooted in the *Phleng Phuea Chiwit* ("Songs for Life") politically engaged music of bands such as Caravan, Carabao, and northern folk duo Jaran Manophetch and Suntaree Wechanon, who were in turn inspired by Bob Dylanesque protest folk music of the 1960s (see Amporn 2006; Ubonrat 1989; Ferguson 2010; Mitchell 2011; Choudhury & Neogi 2013).

The Akha Album

The conversation leading up to this information was pretty straightforward. We had left the Golden triangle and were driving back to Chiang Rai. Aju put in a CD of some *luk thung* country music from Isaan. We both tapped our fingers to the upbeat rhythms, and a musical conversation ensued.

"Aju, who would you say is the 'Jaran Manophetch' of Akha music? Is there one musician that every Akha person would know?"

He looked over at me and laughed.

"Me!"

Figure 21: A young Aju Jupoh performs at an Akha gathering (Photo courtesy of Aju Jupoh, c.a. 1987)

Aju wrote *Aq kaq Zaq Ma (We are the Akha*), a *phuenmueang* (folk) album in 1986 (right at the historical moment of increased encroachment of lowland authorities). Many of the songs on this cassette album dealt directly with issues as understood by AFECT-affiliated youth (the need for education, the need to preserve culture amidst descent to the lowlands, and so on). Aju claims that these songs filled the airwaves and were distributed throughout Laos, Burma, China, and Thailand via a cassette piracy that began in 1975 when cassette tapes were first introduced (Wong 1990:78). When the community is too large to congregate at the *de haw,* radio and other media allow for a much-enlarged imagined community (Anderson 2006; Wade 2000). *We are*

the Akha became *the* iconic Akha album, but it was the only one produced by his band. Other Akha artists have followed, but Aju, echoing Nimrod Baranovitch's sentiments about protest genres coopted by commercialized Uyghur ethnicity (82), writes many of them off, saying "they only sing about love and little else" (personal interview). The point of the AFECT band and music was to solidify a sense of ethnic consciousness,[160] and the transnational radio distribution became the vehicle of organization. The album was the content.

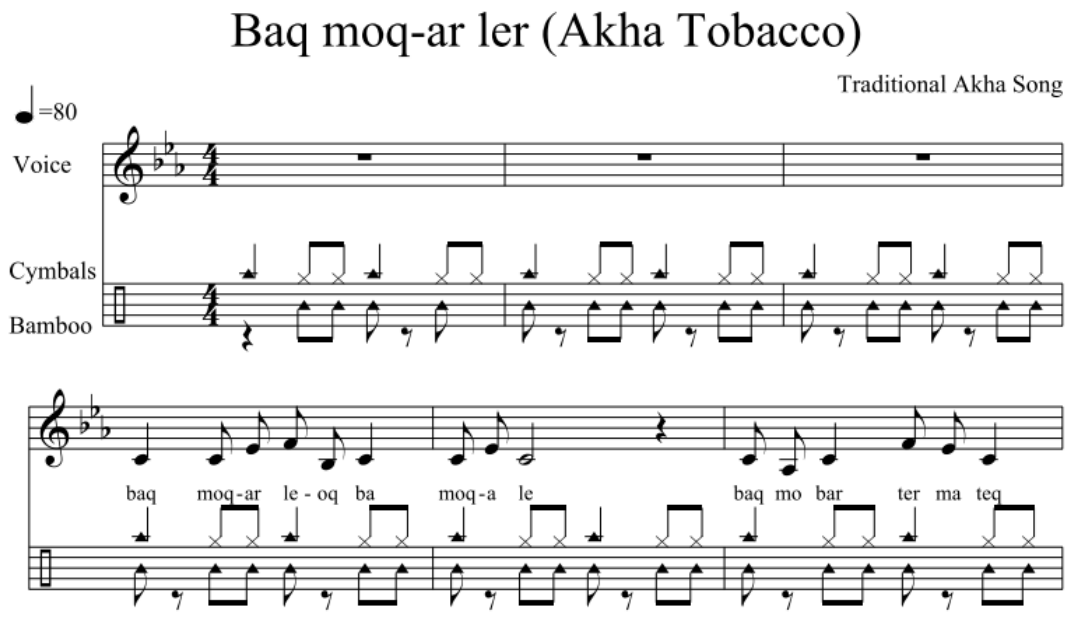
As with the *dehaw* scene described by Goodman, Aju's album is a mix of "traditional" and more eclectic works that are informed by and/or speak to lowland and international tastes. The notion of gathering a once-dispersed Akha collective is evident in the title information alone—it is a mix of contributions from an Akha diaspora as they condense and center around the magnetic center that is Aju:

1. *"Aq kaq zaq ma* (We are the Akha)." Written by Aju Jupoh in the Akha village in 1985
2. *"Ar yehv 1 dzangq* (One bunch of flowers)." Traditional Akha song sung by all of the Akha in Southeast Asia
3. *"Ngar gaq-eu hgaq-o* (Whom I miss)." Written by the Burmese Akha, Kiengtung Province
4. *"Maq jaq tangq xoq sav puir* (White cucumber)." Written by the Burmese Akha, Kiengtung Province
5. *"Dzangr tav zaq saq* (Poor Mountain People)." Written by Aju Jupoh in London 1989
6. *"Baq moq-ar ler* (Akha Tobacco)." Traditional Akha song sung by all of the Akha in Southeast Asia
7. *"Chivq yehr* (Friends)." Written by Aju Jupoh in 1984 at the Akha village, Chiang Rai Thailand
8. *"Hgehq ar yehv* (Cherry blossom)." Written by the Chinese Akha, Xishuanbanna Province, Southern China
9. *"Saq laq ka-eu* (Plant Cotton)." Written by the Chinese Akha, Yunnan Province, Southern China
10. *"Ja deh* (The Akha Homeland)". Written by Aju Jupoh in 1984 in the Akha village, Chiang Rai, Thailand
11. *"Aq bawr Li haiq* (Uncle Lee-hi)." Written by the Akha in Thailand
12. *"Sangq paq xav-awr zaq langr saq-eu* (The Government Power Made People Sad)" Written by Aju Jupoh in 1986 Chiang Rai, Thailand[161]

A cursory first glance at this lineup of songs demonstrates some ideas at work in this

internationally-imagined Akha connection as well as Aju's own transnational presence in local and western settings. While Aju writes on political topics from abroad and from his local village, he has also gathered other Akha expressions from Burma and China, as well as two songs that "all Akha of Southeast Asia" know and sing. This notion of unity supersedes the need to compose a new national anthem (though the stability of recording technology and Romanized script operates to formalize and confirm this fixedness of Akha cultural production).

Out of two numbers listed as known by *all* Akha, *Baq moq-ar ler (Akha Tobacco)* is rendered with traditional instruments, most notably the bamboo stamping tubes (*bau chung*) that beat out a distinctive percussive pattern throughout (X - X X). The *bau chung* were typically played by women—men played flat gongs and goblet drums—at ceremonies marking agricultural cycles.



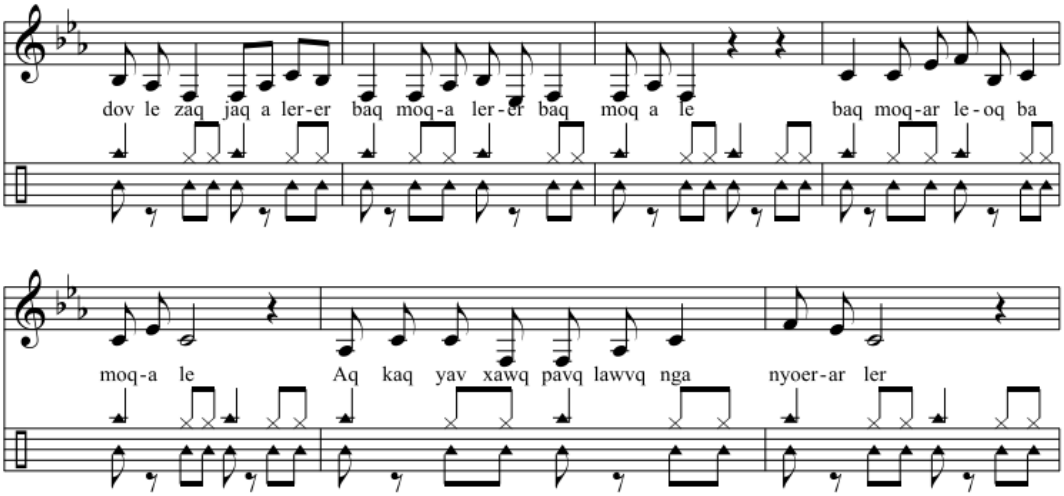
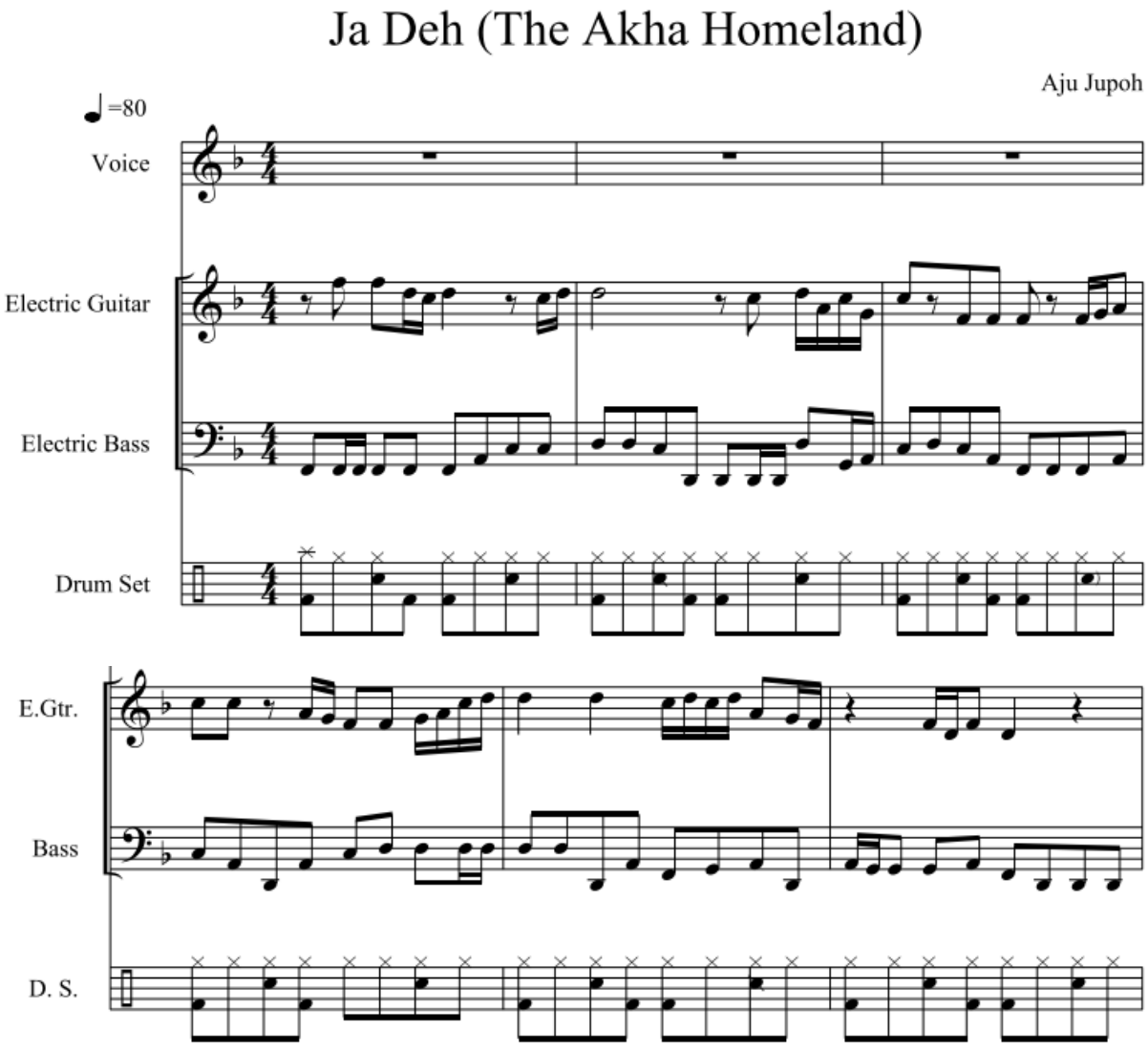


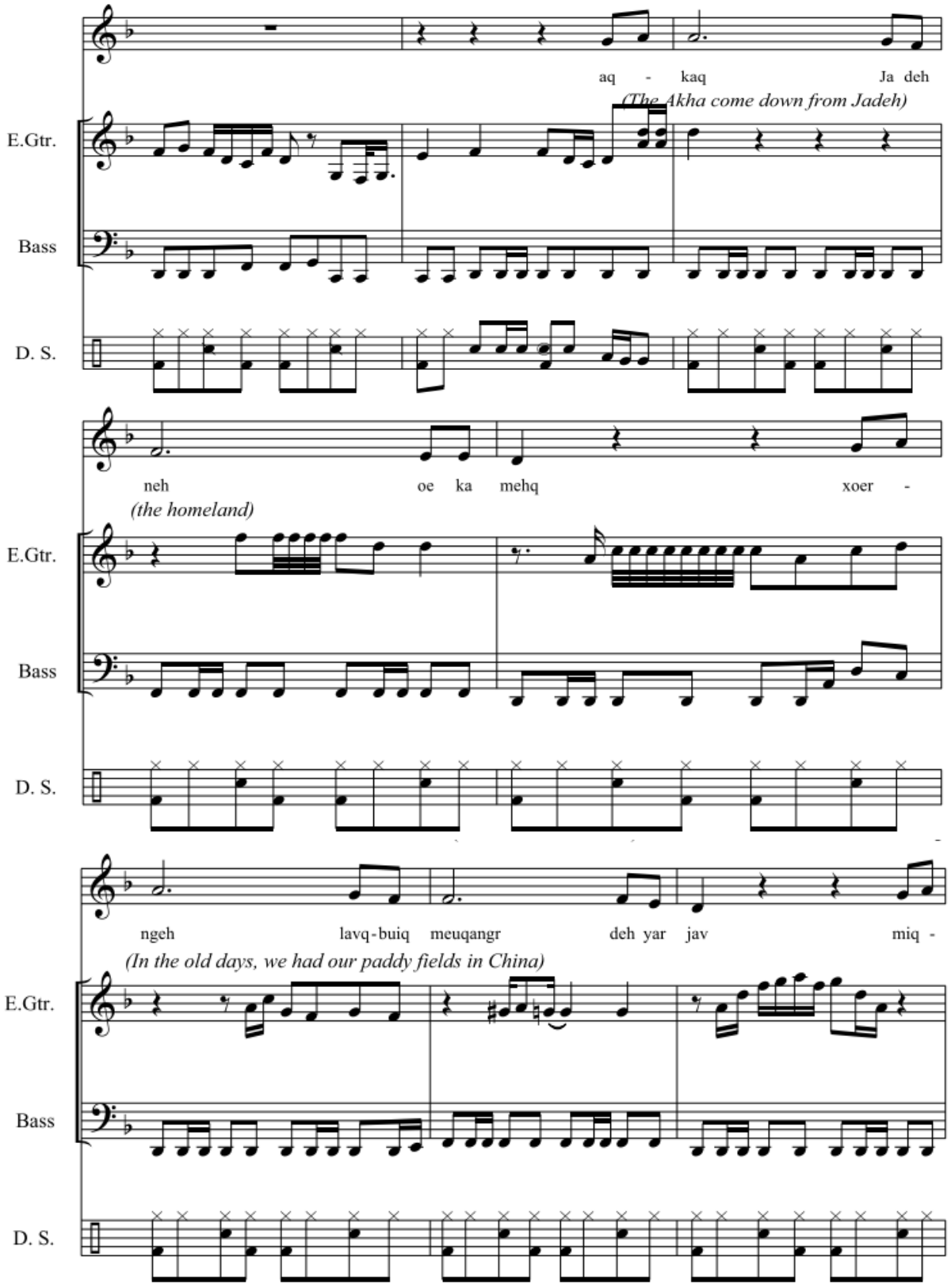
Figure 22: *Baq moq-ar ler* (Akha Tobacco) transcription. Shows traditional stamping tube percussion pattern played on the *bau chung* (bamboo tubes struck against a rock). [CD Track 33]

"*Baq moq-ar ler* (Akha Tobacco)" is the only song on the album to exclusively use traditional instruments.[162] The vast majority of the songs on the album, and especially those written by Aju himself, adhere more closely to the aesthetics of *luk thung* (Thai country music) or *phleng phuea chiwit* ("Songs for life"), both of which are more recognized and loved by lowland Thais and which are laced with nostalgia for rustic rural romanticism (Amporn 2006; Shahriari 2011:189-90) or leftist Bob-Dylan-inspired folk lyrics speaking to defiance of central government programs (Ubonrat 1990; Ferguson 2010; Mitchell 2011). Interestingly, both *luk thung* and *phleng phuea chiwit* are themselves inspired in part by latin American genres—*luk thung* borrows sounds from mambo and over-the-top carnival costuming first encountered in the Southeast Asia tours of Xavier Cugat and his band from Havana (Amporn 2006), while *phleng phuea chiwit* sets the tremolo plucking of the double course chordophones of Isaan (*phin*) and Lanna (*sueng*) to the *huayno* strum patterns of pan-Latin *Nueva Canción*, a 1960s neo-folk protest music of the Andes (Manuel 1988). To these strummings Aju has overlaid an echo effect reminiscent of Goodman's *de haw* music description (where words are repeated just after the

lead singer has uttered them).

Both the tremolo plucking and the *huayno* rhythms in the guitar and bass are featured here (if not in the intro then especially once the singer enters), in "*Jadeh* (the Akha Homeland)" [CD Track 35], a song about being driven out of ancestral territory (and other homes since):




aq - kaq Ja deh
(The Akha come down from Jadeh)
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.
neh oe ka mehq xoer -
(the homeland)
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.
ngeh lavq-buiq meuqangr deh yar jav miq -
(In the old days, we had our paddy fields in China)
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.

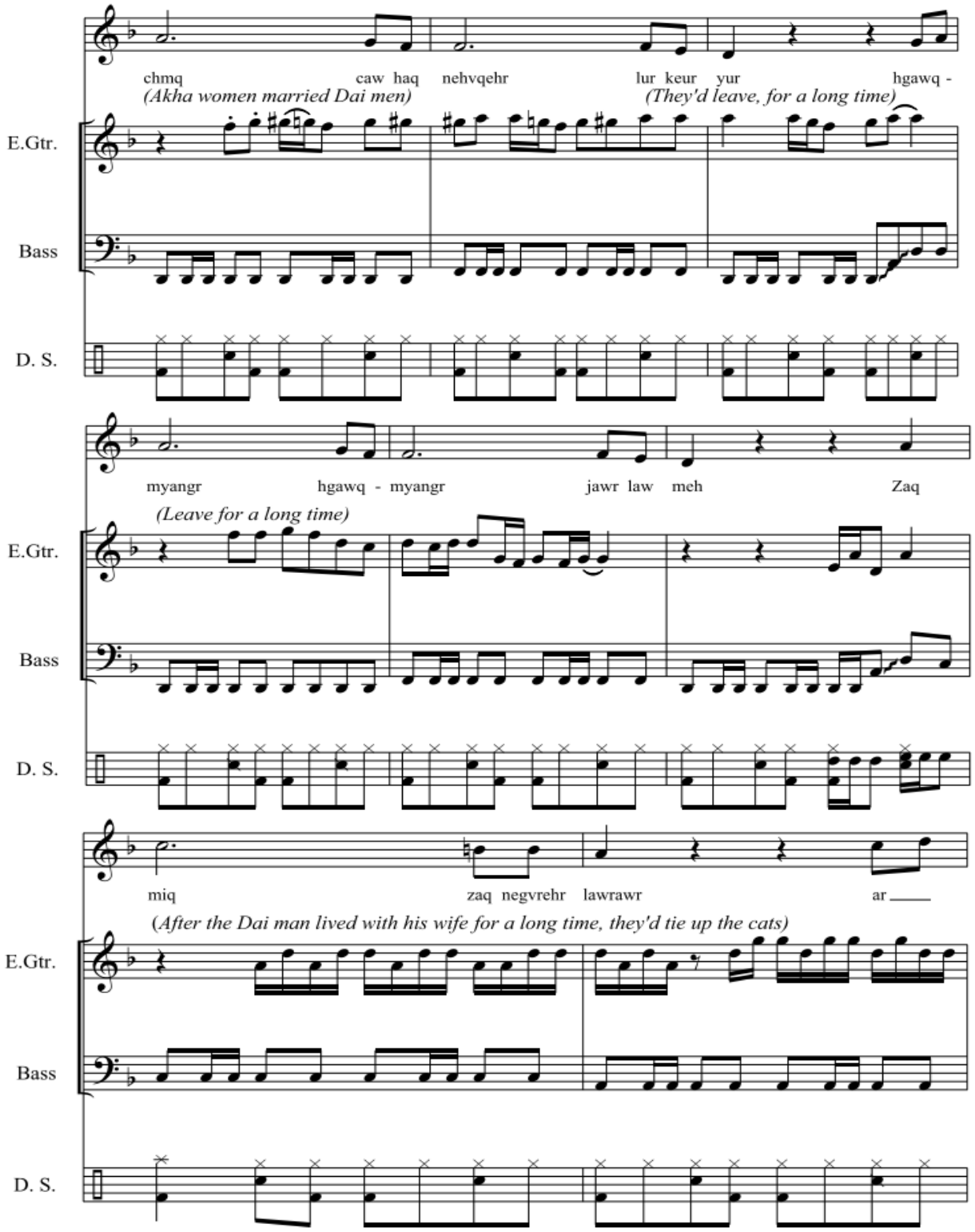


Figure 23: Transcription of "*Jadeh* (the Akha Homeland)," showing *huayno* bass rhythm. The lyrics about tying up the cat refers to an Akha practice of establishing a new village.[163]

The tremolo plucking of the guitar for these *luk thung* inspired pieces can be understood as syncing up with national lowland styles rather than borrowed from American or Western folk genres, as the *phin* and *sueng* both provide precedent for this strumming style, but only if the point stands that Aju, an Akha highlander, has descended down to the lowlands to adopt these Thai-Lao musical methods as a connoisseur of these genres. *Luk thung* works well as a means for reaching a broader Southeast Asian audience,[164] and Aju freely borrows these sounds and themes to speak to the Akha, lowlanders, and international audiences about Akha in a medium that appeals to all three. His tremolo guitar solos resonate with Thais accustomed to the Isaan *phin* as well as westerners familiar with Simon and Garfunkel's rendition of Alomia Robles' "El Condor Pasa." Aju's opening number on the album, *"Aq kaq zaq ma* (We are the Akha)" [CD track 29], lifts the opening melody straight from the introduction of a northern *luk thung* piece one of my interviewees listed as important to northern Thai identity, "*Kulab Wieng Phing* (Rose of Ping City)." Thus, the song would come with instant recognizability to a northern Thai *luk thung* fan.

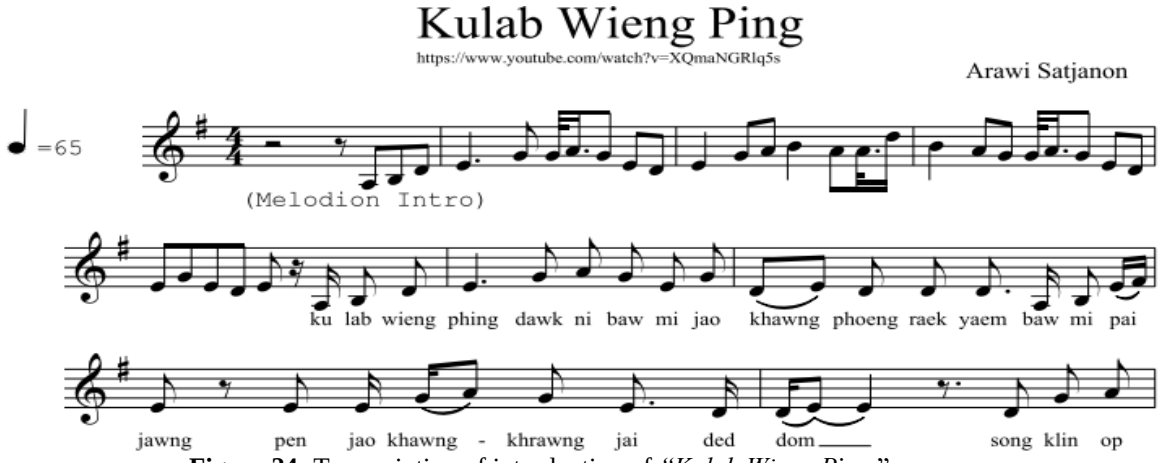
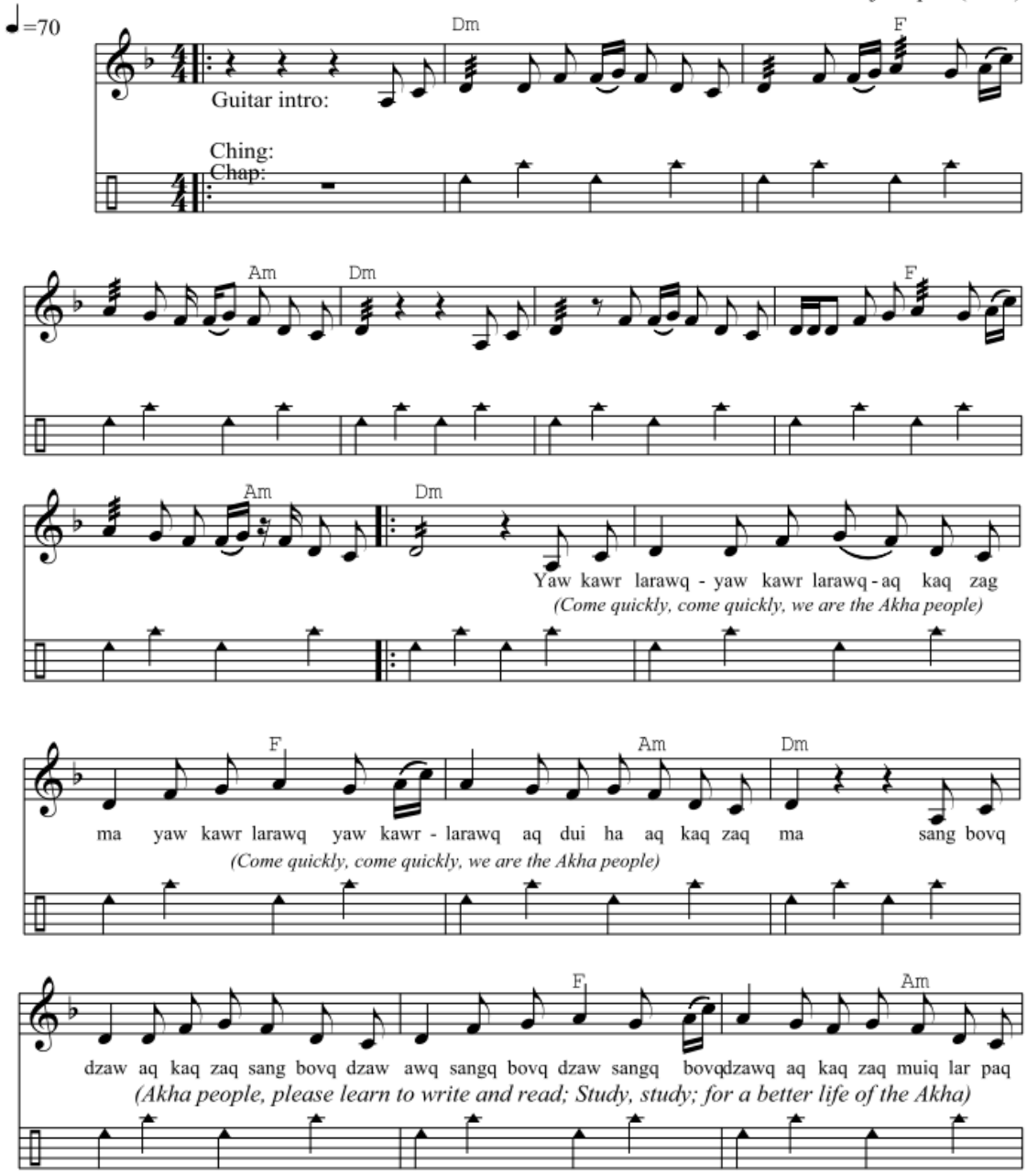


Figure 24: Transcription of introduction of *"Kulab Wieng Ping.*"

Aq kaq zaq ma (We are Akha)

Aju Jupoh (1985)



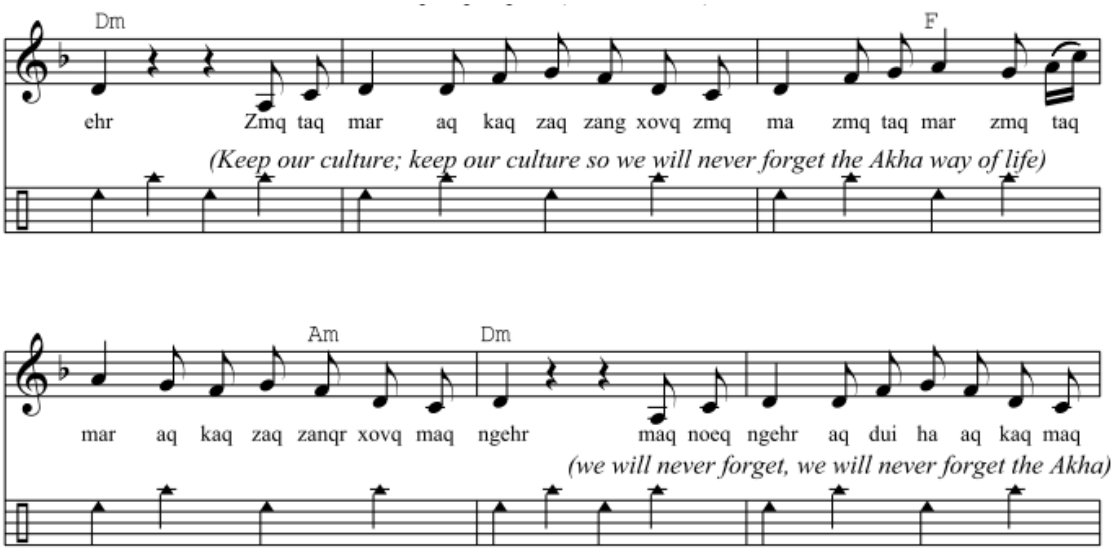
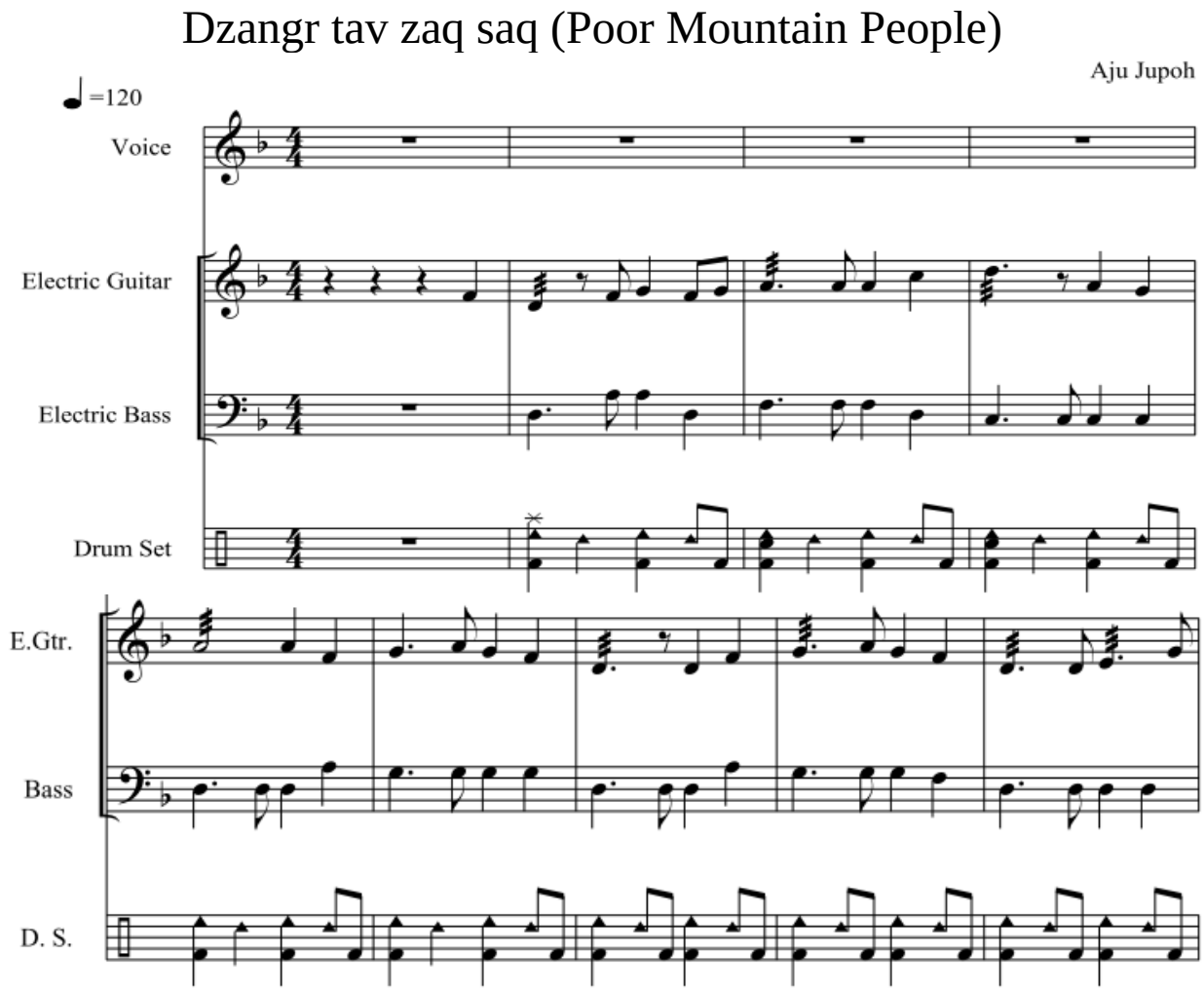


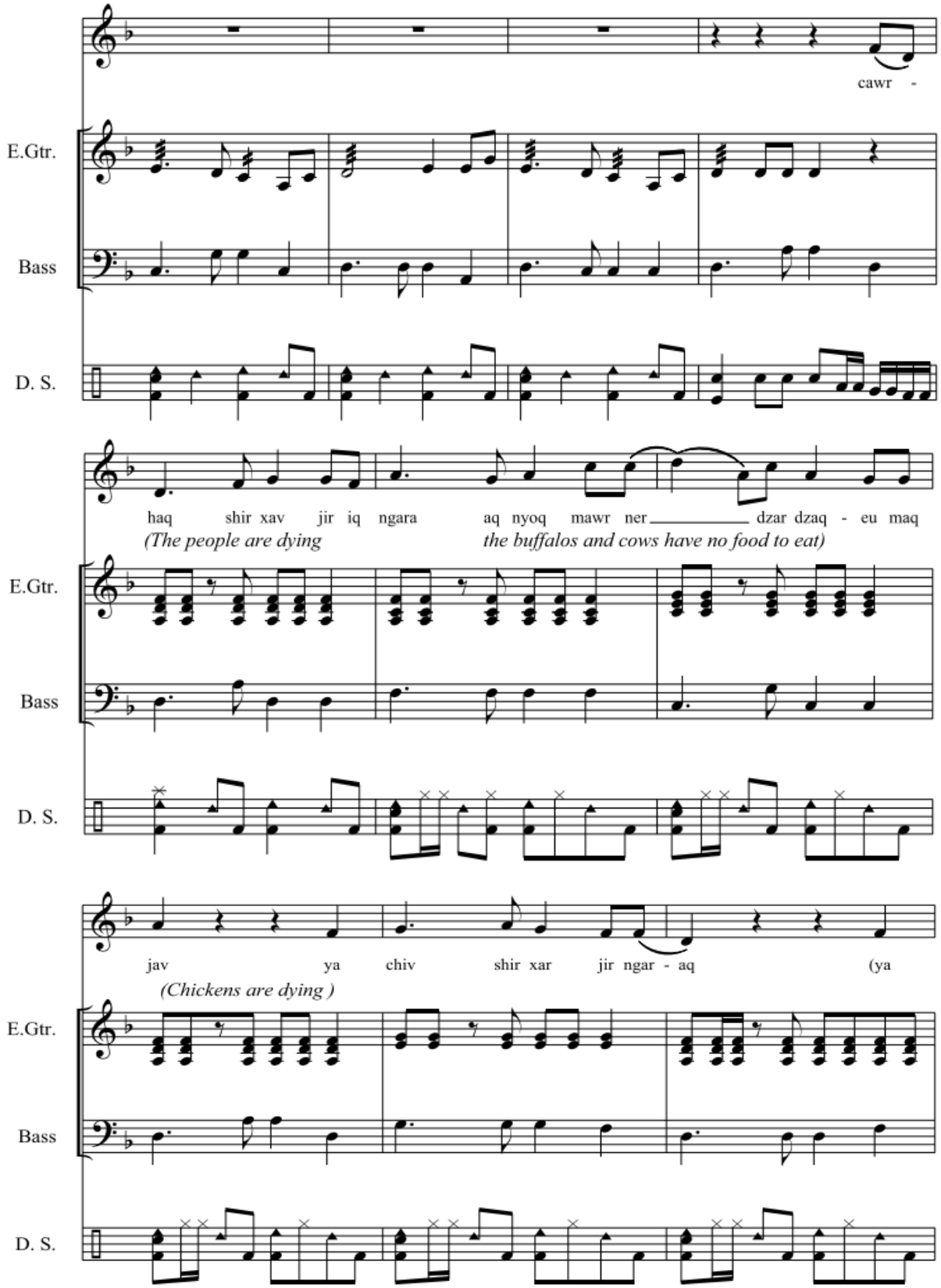
Figure 25: Transcription of *"Aq kaq zaq ma* (We are the Akha)" [CD Track 29]

In this notation I include the melody and the *ching* part to highlight the Thainess being referenced. This is a *luk thung* piece and features the typical elements of the genre: minor pentatonic melody, Thai vocal ornamentation (*uean*) and vibrato (*luk khaw*), narrative lyrics describing the plight of the poor and displaced, and a heavily-emphasized regionality in lyrics and character—Thai techniques and western instruments (Ampon 2006:29). As *luk thung* famously turned around the stereotype of the poor and uneducated *khon Isaan* (person from the northeast, of Laotian heritage) from stigmatized to celebrated as the locus of Thai traditional life (Shahriari 2011: 187; Douglas 85), Aju here attempts a similar recombination of nostalgia, progress, and highland-referencing "rusticity" (Amporn 2006).

While *luk thung* speaks to a nationalist urban Thai audience (as well as to a pan-Southeast Asian commercial audience), *phleng phuea chiwit* is a genre appropriated and linked up with a more global leftist solidarity[165]. Just as the members of legendary Thai band *Carabao* returned from the Philippines with a tight, people's rock-folk sound (Choudhury 2013: 289; Wong in Lockard 1996: 174), Aju's travels to London inspired some politically-fused folk rock

sensibilities. Aju's *"Dzangr tav zaq saq* (Poor Mountain People)," with its heavy rock beat backed by a cowbell, could have been taken straight out of *Carabao*'s songbook [CD Track 32].




cawr -
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.
haq shir xav jir iq ngara aq nyoq mawr ner dzar dzaq - eu maq
(The people are dying the buffalos and cows have no food to eat)
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.
jav ya chiv shir xar jir ngar - aq (ya
(Chickens are dying)
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.

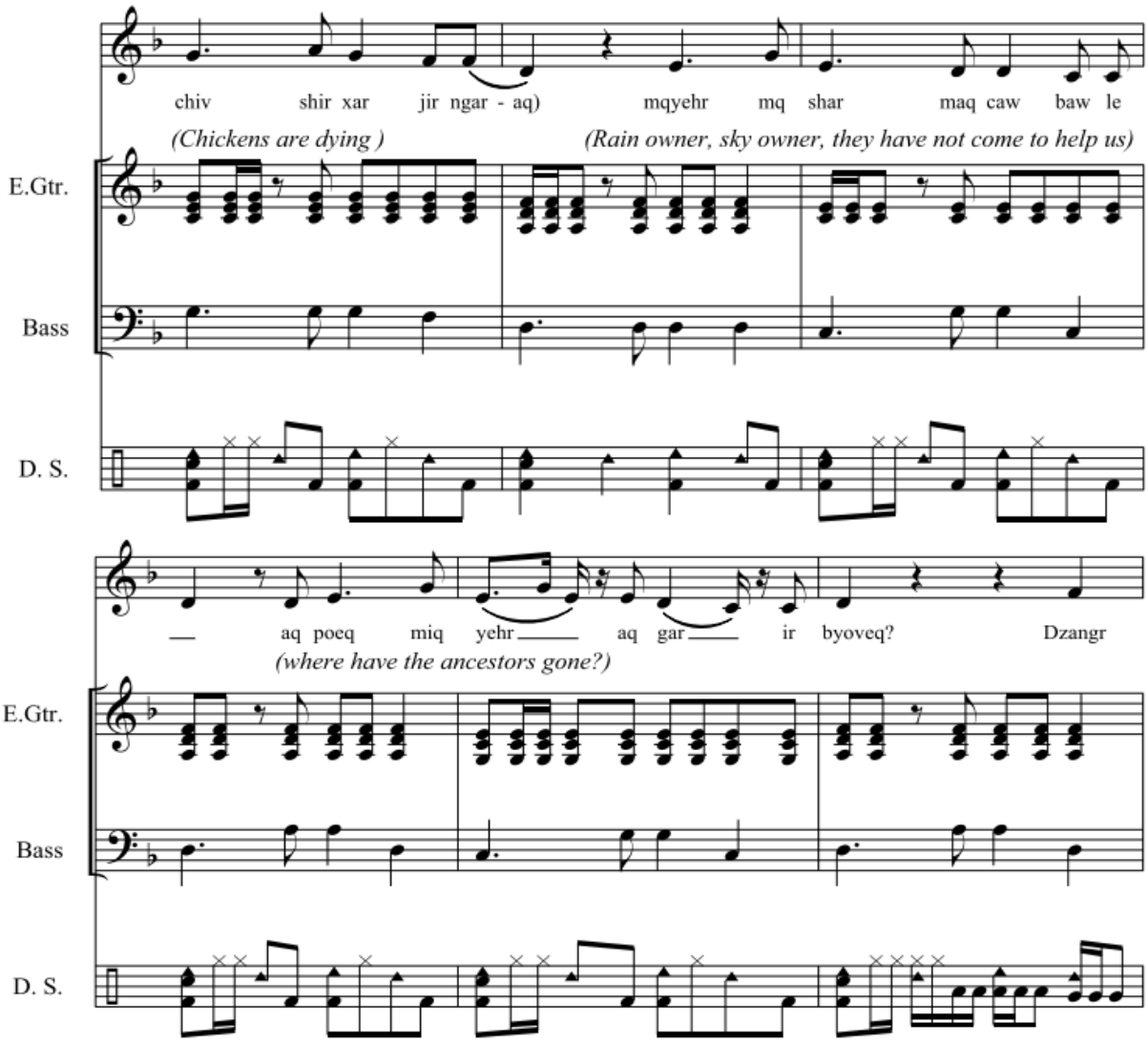
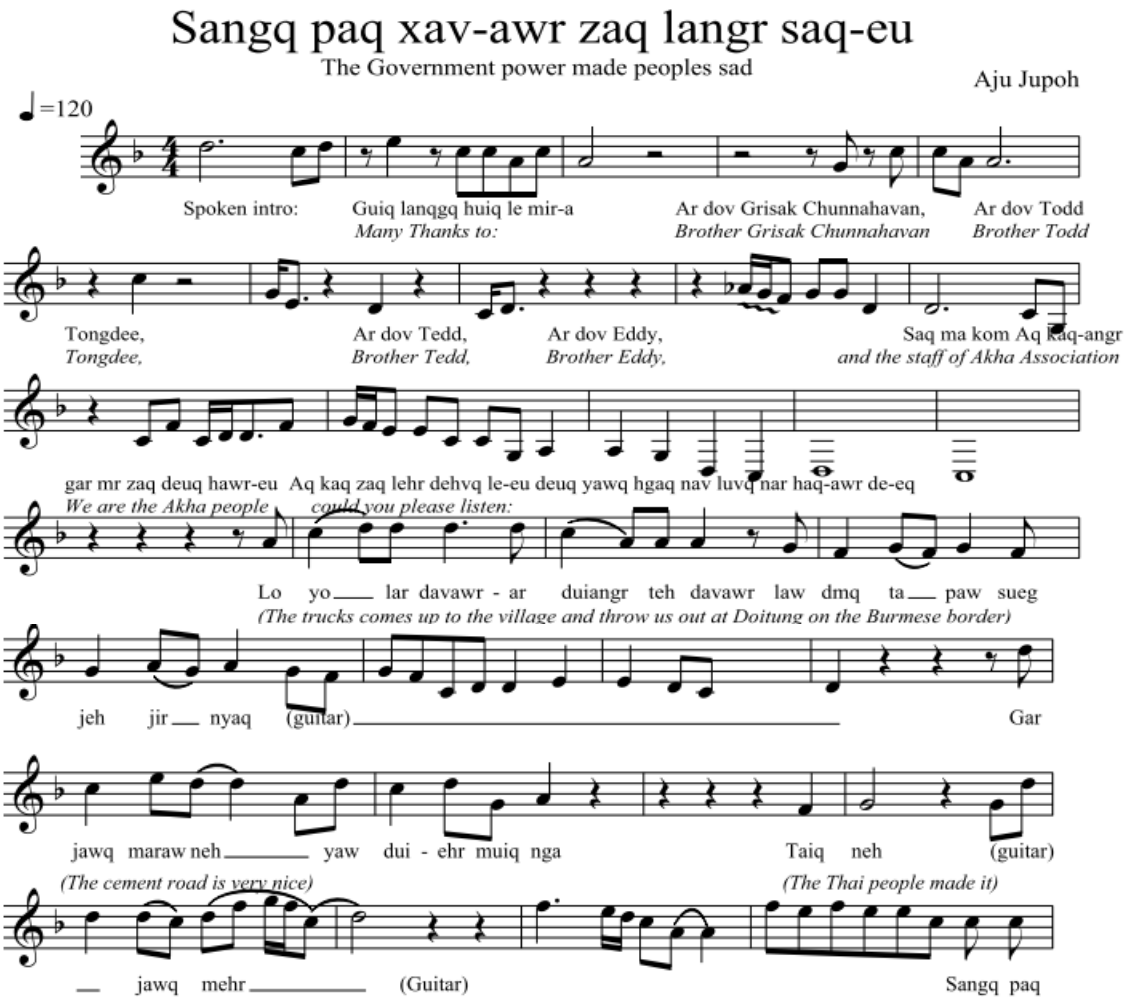


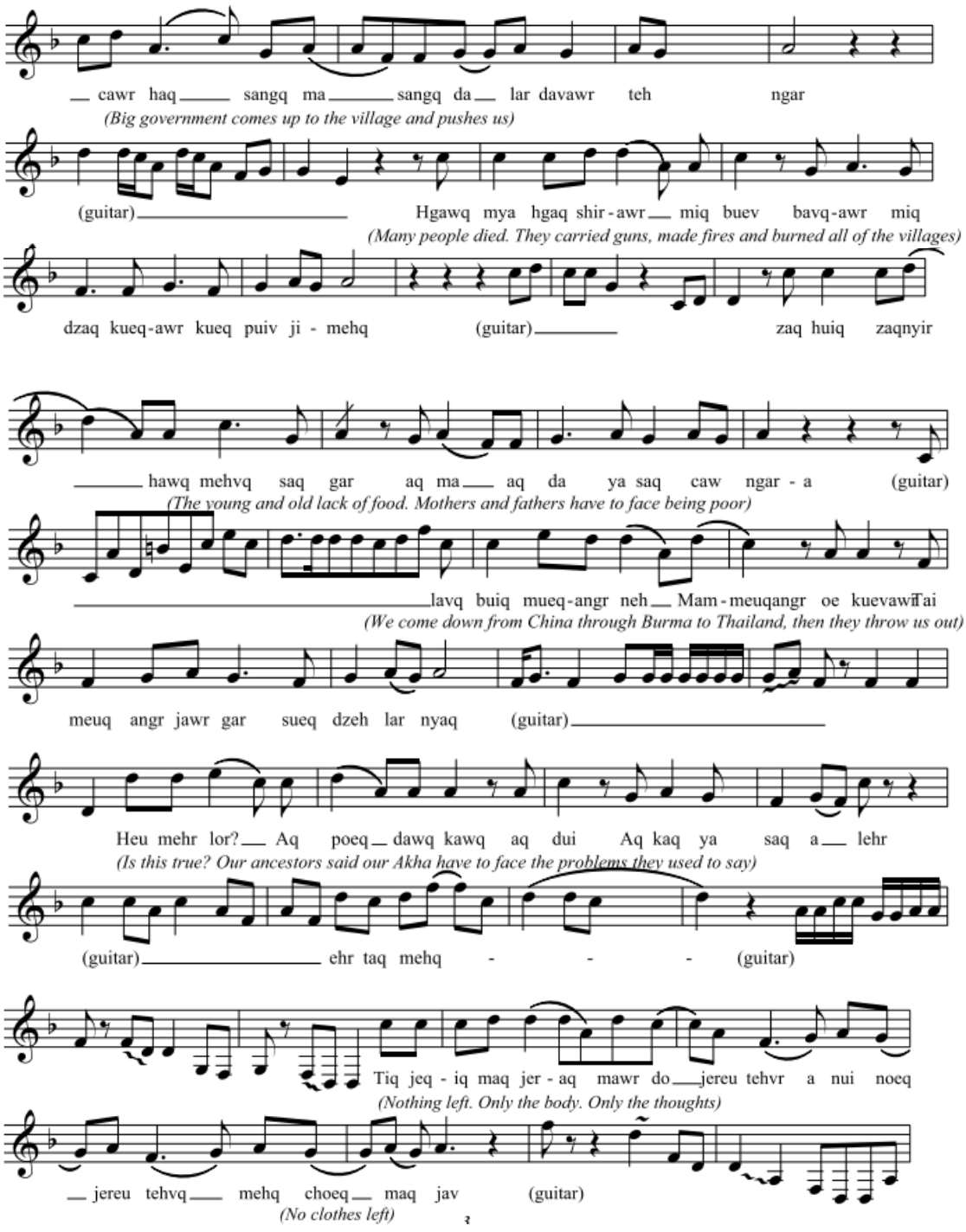
Figure 26: Transcription of *"Dzangr tav zaq saq* (Poor Mountain People)"

The antiphonal crowd responses here, marked off by parentheses ("*Ya chiv shir xar jir ngar-aq")*, and throughout this piece are also a typical participatory aspect of *luk thung* and *phleng phuea chiwit*.[166] Even if the up-close and personal *de haw* musical experience has been distanced through mediazation and staged performance (Tooker 2004), participation and interaction has not been eradicated here.

Phleng phuea chiwit songs typically inspire kinetic responses, but they also deal with political issues, either through satirical or sentimental means (Ubonrat 1990: 68). *Carabao*'s

"*Tawb Nu Thi"* (Please Answer the Child), about the torching of a government school in the south, is a classic amped-down example of this tear-jerking genre that paints victims of oppression and aggression as needing support; Pipat Boribun's *"Puyai Li*" (Village head Li) is an example of the comedic approach to protesting government policy, where an uneducated village leader interprets a government development program (peppered with high pali-sanskrit terms inaccessible to a rural farmer) as calling for all villagers to raise dogs (*sunak*) rather than pigs (*sukorn*) (Ubonrat 1990: 69).[167] Aju's ballad about the Akha of Doi Tung touches on these same emotions and evokes the same sentiments.[168] [CD Track 36]




cawr haq sangq ma sangq da lar davawr teh ngar
(Big government comes up to the village and pushes us)
(guitar) Hgawq mya hgaq shir - awr miq buev bavq - awr miq
(Many people died. They carried guns, made fires and burned all of the villages)
dzaq kueq - awr kueq puiv ji - mehq (guitar) zaq huiq zaqnyir
hawq mehvq saq gar aq ma aq da ya saq caw ngar - a (guitar)
(The young and old lack of food. Mothers and fathers have to face being poor)
lavq buiq mueq - angr neh Mam - meuqangr oe kuevawi'ai
(We come down from China through Burma to Thailand, then they throw us out)
meuq angr jawr gar sueq dzeh lar nyaq (guitar)
Heu mehr lor? Aq poeq dawq kawq aq dui Aq kaq ya saq a lehr
(Is this true? Our ancestors said our Akha have to face the problems they used to say)
(guitar) ehr taq mehq - - - (guitar)
Tiq jeq - iq maq jer - aq mawr do jereu tehvr a nui noeq
(Nothing left. Only the body. Only the thoughts)
jereu tehvq mehq choeq maq jav (guitar)
(No clothes left)

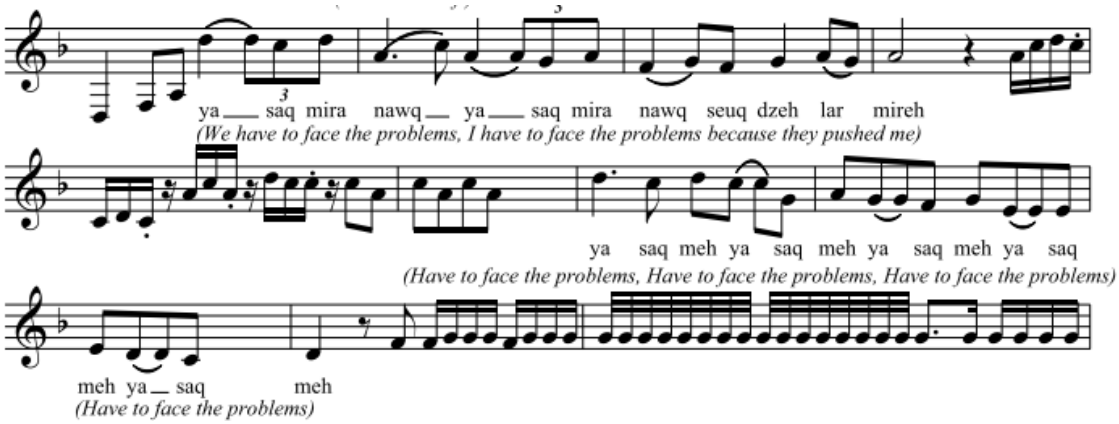


Figure 27: Transcription of Aju Jupoh's "*Sangq paq xar-awr zaq langr saq-eu* (The Government Power Made People Sad)." See appendix for full transcription.

This blending of various lowland genres evidences Aju's exposure to, love of, and appropriation of genres that appeal to a new generation of non-isolated Akha youth across borders. The lyrics also demonstrate a self-awareness of media and broader connections made available through popular music styles and broadcast systems. Standardized media and newly-formalized Akha script allows for these broader connections to link up Akha communities in the absence of an Akha nation and through measures provided by lowland technologies. The radio station in Chiang Mai linked Akha in Burma to Akha in Laos, delivering mundane messages about ordering woven cloth while also solidifying ethnic links. That the radio and the musicians featured on it connected the imagined community was known amongst these artists can be seen in the lyrics of "*Aqbawr Li Haiq* (Uncle Lee-hi)."

> *Lar meh ler lar, lar meh ler. aq li aq bur pu ka chang chang-ehr hgaq sar-ehr gur nga aq aq bawr Lee haiq lar ngar-a*
> (He's coming, he's coming, boys and girls hanging around the village shouting that uncle Lee hi is coming)
>
> *Miq davq chehr yehq yehq-eu bawq keuv bavq-awr neh yeuvq char-awr nar haq-awq,*
> (Girls harvesting rice, everyone is carrying radios and turning them on to listen)
>
> *yehq xovq yur taq-awr dawq nuir nuir-awr neh yawq hgaq nav luvq nar haq-awq aq bawr Lee haiq char gar-a*

(Everyone is putting down the sickle and sitting down to listen to uncle Lee hi singing…)

Aq yuivq aq nyir aq piq aq bawr, ngar char-eu gaq nar-aq, lawr bawq maq dawr ni, ar myovq teu mawr yawr char nya-ar nya, ngar aq bur jawr lawr nmr-aq yawr kawr-ehr bi mr dzaq ir ma
(Relatives and, old woman, old man, if they hear my voice they stop drinking tea, and they say this guy is singing so nicely, if I had a daughter I'd get her married to him quickly…)

Meuq taiq meuq ma mir xangq cawr haq, ngar neh dawq char-euq gaq ler jir meh, hawq dzaq-eu keuv lar, nar haq mir neh, dzaq-eu lehr haw ngeh aq kuiq neh dzaq jir nga
(A big Thailand, everyone in this world can hear my voice, the time for a meal comes, everyone is still listening, and when they are turning around the dog ate it all…)

Aq yuivq aq nyir aq li aq bur, nar haq mawvq nar-aq ar bovq bovq levq, yawq hgaq nav luvq bi nar haq ma, heu nav-i nya ngeh ngaq-angr byeh nar-aq ngar hgeh maq ehr nya-a nya
(Brother and sister, boys and girls, if you want to listen [to] my voice, please write to me, I'll let everyone listen, I'm good like this if you hate me, I cannot say anything)

Clearly, the radio is present in "Uncle Lee-hi" as the deliverer of Akha connection and the object spoken of in that connection. Quite possibly, the radio is the metaphor as well as the metanymn of Akha gathering, to borrow Stephen Feld's sentiment (1990). Here as well as with Christian Filipino diasporic populations, the radio provides and also *is* the space of these ethnic collectives (see Wiegele in Adams and Gillogly 2011: 173). Yet, while the state unsurprisingly provides the infrastructure for such gathering (electricity, satellites, communications technology), it is also providing the infrastructure of taste in Bourdieu's sense, where dominant cultural values are leveled from and accepted by individual actors (1985). This attention to state-supported taste and musical style framing is overlooked and understated within Turino's discussion of participatory music, focused as he is on the actions and actors primarily. Aju and others will sing about the infrastructure and technology including roads and radios—here, a Thai

state technology or hegemonic culture is acknowledged, whether it be neutral, aggressive, or coopted. But less openly acknowledged, celebrated, or lamented, is this taste-space, or the stylistic framing of the music experience. Tooker celebrates Akha spatialization tactics as Akha find ways to maneuver through or evade *geographic* and bordered *physical* space, but in many ways, these musical endeavors are still operating within Thai *aesthetic* spatial framing unchallenged, and, in James Scott terminology, not evaded.

Figure 28: Closing scenes from *Virtual Borders* show Akha gathered around battery-powered radios all across Southeast Asia (many in villages without electricity). They tuned in regularly to the Chiang Mai signal to hear the proceedings of the international conference. Here, they listen to the summary of Chiang Rai Akha leader Abaw Buseuv as he discusses the future of the ethnic group in Southeast Asia.

Taste and Participatory Music

In a sense, Turino and Seeger both seem to veer toward a universalist frame with participatory music and music-space-time—as a necessity for theorizing, these are generalized

enough to be applied to any culture.[169] Benedict Anderson noticed a similar trend of the global left in *Imagined Communities*—ultimately, the "workers of the world" fractured into *Vietnamese* comrades, or *Chinese* comrades, or were fitted with other appropriate ethno-national prefixes (1-3). For Turino, the application of "flow" to musical participation (2008) is a brilliant psycho-analytical application of sound and sentiment, yet the notion of losing one's sense of self awareness in the midst of participation, whether celebrated for inspiring unity or critiqued as mob mentality, might also benefit by the addition of an exploration of the implied loss of *cultural* self-awareness.[170] As Turino states, "For those deeply engaged in listening, dancing, or playing music, symbolic word-based thought may be suspended *entirely* during those periods in which a flow state is achieved and the person is in the moment" (15).

As the act of participation blurs the linguistic or symbolic distinctions we make between self and other (195), I submit that it also, to a degree, glosses over and makes irrelevant *that* "the other" *has* presence in the structures of the music we partake of and participate in. These are the instances where messages and their vessels of delivery are embodied, bypassing cognitive scrutiny by an aware self as the excitement of participation overrules critical engagement with the text or sub-text at hand (Wagner 1996; Chuang & Hart 2007). Seeger and Turino both temporarily lay aside the role of cultural specificity in these psychological and universal notions of music as a discursive, social, or linguistic tool. Here, music as *social* life or music as *human* communication downplays the nuanced role of *national culture*, and this very instance, where the shields are lowered amidst euphoric participation in musical moments separate from quotidian space-time, is where the lowland culture enters and operates, via *taste-space*, without notice or criticism.

Certainly, before and after these moments of intense participation, actors can reflect on

the presence and purpose of these appropriations, the "innovations" as well as the "invasions" (see chapter two), but as participants get caught up in the moments of song and dance, the idea that they are enacting the self within a Thai-supplied infrastructure of taste becomes a non-issue, neither engaged nor processed. Perhaps this is one reason why Thongchai sees localism as non-threatening and as a non-challenge to central Thai dominance (1995). Perhaps this is the reason why these local musical traditions may not ultimately challenge or threaten the Thai state, or even Thai cultural hegemony. If a central power can claim the underlying space (whether geo-cultural or taste-framed), the events that take place within that space can be classed as permissions granted by the lords of the (low)land.[171]

But is taste the end-all? Does it prove acquiescence or nullify anti-national sentiments? Is this the (con)temporary triumph of state-sponsored multi-culturalism as defined by the state, or is there something post-, para-, or supra-national going on here? Turino's analytical frame—especially his notion of "semantic snowballing" (2000:176), whereby layers of meaning are added on within repeat performance and imbue performances with multiple indexical meanings—implies that there is more than musical participation going on here. It is social, of course, but it is also framed in national spaces, geographical and aesthetic. Though neo-traditionalist Akha music and movements are produced with Akha language, in Akha-constructed script, and are about Akha stories and experiences, the aesthetic framing of it, while not proving an acquiescence to lowland Thai hegemony, does show that Thai state, national, and cultural vestments are present. The state is thus not irrelevant, not bypassed, not absent. Here, the state, via the cultural taste-space referenced through performance, is a participant in this Akha participatory music. As participants lose themselves in participation, they are participating in more than music. Turino points to the inclusiveness of community, culture, and identity (2008:

13-15), but I want to highlight the unintended, unwelcomed, unacknowledged participation also at play here. Chi and Aju both alluded to this in their "Songs of Memory" lectures. As mentioned before, Chi, responding to an audience member who pointed out that his songs had some similarities to western country music or church hymns, easily labeled exogenous influence as "poison" that he could not take out (Public lecture, 5/14/2012). Aju's comments similarly point to the state's presence:

> Normally, we didn't have electricity, no television, no newspaper, no radio. But all the villages would come together to dance, to enjoy together. In this village square there comes knowledge: generation to generation. For instance, my Akha people came from Poh, our ancestor. For my clan up to now, if I start from the first Akha until me, there are 53 generations that have to be remembered. If we count the genealogy, we can find out about the other Akha located in China, Laos, Myanmar, and Thailand. Like the branch of a tree, like the roots. Amazing, isn't it?
>
> And we don't have a writing system. During a funeral ceremony, the *pima* sits on the side, hitting the bamboo...he calls all of the knowledge of the whole Akha for 3 days, 4 nights…This kind of knowledge is almost dying out, because globalization wipes our brains. We have to follow computer, internet, mobile phone, move to the city. How can we survive? How can our kids of the next generation preserve the earth? My people are still unsure today. In the jungle, you find food, you cook the rice with bamboo. See? We made chopsticks out of wood, made a bowl with bamboo. Cooking pots are also made from bamboo. This kind of skill, if it's gone, how can it be recalled?
>
> Okay, too serious! Ha ha! I'll play some music. (Public lecture 5/17/12)

The technology cited by Aju above is communication in the same way that participatory engagement is communication. When steeped in it, its presence goes unnoticed because, as Csikszentmihalyi puts it, "In flow there is no need to reflect… there is not enough attention left over to allow a person to consider either the past or the future" (54, 62). A mind so engaged in a flow state is not to be bothered with external thoughts, as the focused engagement on the task removes the ability to consider the trivial, the external, or the non-integrated (41, 53). When the

music flows, the participants flow, and the critical self is temporarily removed from the picture. Aju gets nostalgic about the pre-globalization days with no internet or radio, yet his primary means of reaching out to the Akha are through a globalized folk genre and through internet connectivity. In another lecture at the "Songs of Memory" exhibit, he switches effortlessly from demonization to appropriation, where modern tools can be denounced and celebrated in the same breath as the cause and the cure. This multi-sided view is not a problematic contradiction for Aju but rather draws from an adjustable or "modular" approach (Tooker 2004) to engagement with the outside:

> I'm trying to preserve my own culture. I film and edit the yearly ceremony, to help the Akha community. Actually, we didn't have a writing system, but it was introduced to Akha society after WWII in Myanmar, Kengtung area…so that missionaries could convert them to Christianity…everything in our culture, music, was forbidden. They're screwing things up. That's why I'm trying to get in with the old Akha people in Southeast Asia (China, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand), we're gathering together and we produced our own system, we are able to have contact. Because in this day of globalization, we can use the internet, we can post on the website: www.akhaworld.com. It's got language, some music, it's still developing. Many Akha are knowledgeable in new technology. I'm working with Akha in four countries to preserve our culture. We got some funding from the US embassy in Bangkok to archive our culture.

The quote here shows the nature of participatory engagement, whether musical or cultural. When one feels excluded, the other is clear; yet, when one is engaged and partaking, the invasive qualities of that entity melt away as the task becomes paramount. Aju here is talking about the internet, but he may just as well be speaking of literacy, radios, or even Thai genres and tastes. The *dehaw* did not used to have Thai pop music as a feature, and traditionalists can scoff at its presence. Or, they can take part in it, enter a flow state, and subsequently lose themselves and their criticism, united *as Akha* in movement within a local, globalized, or Thai medium. Music works with culture here, not as a crafted propaganda program or intended hegemony but as co-

incidental, normalized through participation. Sub-texts work within participatory music precisely because the flow state draws attention away from them. Tastes, states, or aesthetics that index powers beyond the we-self operate as the platform, as the frame, as the water unnoticed by the fish. Identities are thus negotiated and foregrounded by actors willing to sing them but also complicated and diversified by the frames obscured via engaged participation.

CHAPTER SIX: Conclusion

Identity, or the we-self, is both an act of distinguishing and a forged connection to a community. Sound and sonic participation enable this. In the keynote address of the East-West Philosophers conference on "Place" in May of 2016 at the East-West Center in Honolulu, "Noise and Sound: A Space to Call 'Home'" by Dr. Sari Nusseibeh and Micah Hendler, Nusseibeh maintained that sound, as one of the first senses to develop in fetuses, acts as *the* first human means of distinguishing inner from outer, self from other. Further, sound as entity cannot be denied entry into the most personal of human, and self, spaces—the mind. Whether welcomed or not, sound enters as it will. Nusseibeh painted an imagined scene of a man hiding from an incoming army, his sense of safety and sanctuary invaded by the onslaught of pounding drums coming from over the hill.

This notion of sound "invading" space (from the prey's point of view) or projecting power and influence (from the perspective of the powers that be; see Andaya 2011) could be further developed within the frame of participatory musical engagement. Acceptance, allowance, or permission here operates as the toggle between invasion and participation. An example of this is one my first experiences of what Deborah Wong describes as a "more is more" concept present in Thai ritual and ceremony (1998).

I had been living in Thailand for less than a month in then-new Sra Kaew province, a dry region a few hours northeast from Bangkok (not quite Isaan, but close). One of the wealthier village politicians had a son who had come of age and would be spending his summer break as a novice monk. The shaving ceremony would take place soon, and a huge party was planned. Just about everyone from the surrounding villages had been invited, including foreigners who had no understanding of what the event was or entailed. In my naiveté, I anticipated a solemn religious

service marked by humble piety. We arrived on site to find hundreds of tables set in dried up rice paddies and lined with plastic blue and red chairs, four separate stages (each with multiple speaker stacks and colored fluorescent lights attracting and highlighting whirling clouds of bugs), free-flowing *Chang* beer and soda water refilled by scantily-clad servers, and what I interpreted as utter, chaotic noise. Each stage blasted sound from speakers at full volume and I could make sense of none of it. Go-go dancers in tight, shimmering, revealing outfits gyrated to electrified *luk thung* music in one corner, monks chanted at another, inaudible announcements and feeding back screeches emanated from somewhere else, a live rock band played *phleng phuea chiwit* on yet another stage, and I could not hear myself think. The personal sanctuary described by Nusseibeh was nowhere to be found here, driven out by invasive sound and musics that competed for organization and primacy within my head. I looked around the table at my Thai counterparts. All were smiling, laughing, toasting, engaging in conversation. I could not understand how an enjoyable conversation could possibly be carried on and was especially baffled when they insisted this scene was so much fun. My ears, my musician's tools, were endangered, and no amount of intercultural training or sensitivity could make the situation acceptable. I discreetly inserted my earplugs and breathed a sigh of relief.

Here, too, Csikszentmihalyi has an explanation. Whereas the mind can process about 120 bits of information per second, information that exceeds this capacity is lost and results in a sense of confusion or chaos. To follow one spoken message, 60 bits per second are required. Thus, one cannot listen to three lectures at the same time (see "Flow, the Secret to Happiness" [2004]).[172] But my point (adding cultural nuance to this phenomenon) remains in that for Thai audiences, the sound was not chaotic and was instead appreciatively cumulative rather than polysonic. As a non-culture carrier, I felt it necessary to parse out and make sense of each piece

of projected sound and was unable to, due to Csikszentmihalyi's notion. Thus, the idea of "chaos," that thing which humans seek to avoid at all costs (Geertz 1968), is culturally constructed (or humanly-organized, to reiterate Blacking's label [Blacking 1973]), and flow or participatory music should make room for such cultural nuance.

In Andaya's view (2011), this Southeast Asian notion of projected sound makes sense (and is thus locally acceptable and sensible) as power emanating from a magnetic center. Before the advent of amplified sound in Thailand, drums had a monopoly on projected sound, and were housed at the Buddhist temple, a site for gathering the village. The louder the drum, the further its reach, the more people could be drawn to the center. Amplified sound in Thailand builds on this past usage, so louder is better and "more is more." That each of the four stages contained its own program presented no sense of contradiction, competition, or chaos for those who permit such a soundscape. Insiders feel invited to participate. To an outsider, it felt like polysonic invasion.

The permission of sound's entrance, a passive allowance of sonic presence, is further claimed and enhanced by agents who actively partake, create, and participate in its existence. Turino's description of its power to motivate, inspire, join, and collectivize a group is not in question here. What I do want to add to the politics of participation is the flip side of exclusion, as well as the less-admitted inclusion obtained and demonstrated even when the actors themselves deny or ignore it. My experience of Lanna *salaw saw sueng* music, both at the grassroots level at weekly gatherings of amateurs from the immediate vicinity of Suan Dawk and as it is presented to gathered members of a broader northern consensus at the *Sao Inthakhin* festival at Chedi Luang temple, offers a prime example of autochthonous ethnic formation and performative inclusion. The music itself operates as a discursive delimiter: the other, the central

state and its cultural extensions, motivate alternative collectives, histories, and performances. But even here, between the euphoric moments of inclusion brought on by participation, lines are drawn to emphasize those outside the we-self even as it makes use of the other's technologies. National and global folk genres undoubtedly influence *salaw saw sueng* and *Folk Song Kham Mueang* music, and local languages are portrayed not with the Lanna local script but with a modified (or "misspelled") central Thai alphabet. These borrowings *are* made distinctive and classed as appropriation in analytical conversations about them when not engaged in participation: in a conversation with Chatri, a *pi jum*[173] musician and instrument maker, he distinguished himself as a northern musician based on the use of notation and improvisation. In his words, "If you just play the notes as they appear on the page, well, that's *central* Thai. *We* perform it from memory." But even as these discursive boundaries are drawn in reflection, the main thrust of participatory music is that the reflexive self fades into the background: participants play by the rules provided and use the tools that make up the performative event. Turino clarifies these two modes:

> Symbolic propositions, statements *about* other things, often call forth an analytical state of mind: that is, they readily inspire the listener to symbolically assess the truth or falsity of the claim being made with the possibility of finding the statement faulty. Icons and especially indices partake of the things they signify, through either resemblance or cooccurrence, and thus seem more natural, real, and hence unquestionable. (2008: 195)

So, verbal arguments provoke analysis, but participation is non-discursive and thus more difficult to contradict—one is engaged in and physically *doing* it! This is why Stokes (1994) and Keil (2005) and others (see Clayton 2012) offer the notion that music is not reflective of reality but rather constitutive of it. Participation is the thing that creates the community. To *say* the we-self exists and that all encompassed within it are all united is contestable as a proposition, but to

involve everyone in synched movement is unity in practice (the enactment of social synchrony).

Thus, to step back and analyze the lyrics (the "symbolic propositions" described by Turino above) of an anthem such as *Mu Hao Jao Nuea* can lead to the demise of its message: we the people of the north (*but just who are "the northerners"? Are highlanders included or are they separate? What about people of Chinese ancestry?*) all speak the same language (*is not Chiang Rai's dialect a little different from Chiang Mai's?*) and are united as one (*Was the kingdom actually unified? Were not Nan and Phrae reluctant to join the Lanna kingdom, hedging their bets by also paying tribute to Ayutthaya* [Sarassawadee 99-106; Wyatt 60, 61, 80, 102]*?*). But in the *act* of singing and dancing it, where participation results in a diminishing ego and self-aware individual and facilitates a turn toward the communal identity felt and enacted in performance, the claim cannot be contradicted so easily, readily, or immediately. The reason for this is the "economical" packaging of meanings in songs, where so many messages are crammed into a piece of music via "semantic snowballing" that one does not have the time to unravel the trail in the same instance that one is participating—again, this is Csikszentmihalyi's claim that the mind cannot process too much information at once, especially while in a flow state where one's concentration is focused and engaged on a rewarding task that matches skill with challenge. To Turino, "Songs have the capacity to condense huge realms of meaning in an economical form through layered indexical meaning as well as the juxtaposition of varied ideas as indexical clusters *without the requirements of rational ordering or argument*" (218, emphasis mine). Thus, the flow state enables the acceptance and the participation in these complex messages, which are here experienced in community and formative of the (we-)self.

In Turino's discussion of self and identity formation and presentation, he borrows from Foucault to address race and *discourse*. Here, the *premise* (that skin color matters) and the *terms*

(referring to oneself as "white" or "black") of discourse are mutually reinforcing and mutually constructive, bringing each other into being and shaping our social interactions. To him, "once such habits of thought become deeply entrenched, they frequently operate below focal awareness—that is, they are taken for granted and do not come up for consideration as to their origin, nature, or accuracy" (2008: 103). No matter the subject matter (race, culture, nation), the discursive framing reifies the notion even as it pushes it to a sub-conscious, taken-for-granted state, and this is accomplished through engaged participation, where the self gives way to a broader communion.

> This need to pay attention results in a kind of heightened, immediate social intercourse; when the performance is going well, differences among participants melt away as attention is focused on the seamlessness of sound and motion. At such moments, moving together and sounding together in a group creates a direct sense of being together and of deeply felt similarity, and hence identity, among participants… When a performance is going great I doubt many people stop to symbolically reflect, "Gee, we are really moving as one," although this is what is felt during the performance and remembered afterward. (43)

As-is reality is here produced (and obscured in its reified status) by the discourse. And Turino shows that it is readily accepted due precisely to the conditions created by engaged participation. The critical, self-aware defenses are down as participants become more fully engaged. Thus, any "invasions" go unnoticed, and participatory music acts as a Trojan horse of sorts. When selves are locked into states of flow and participation, "it also leads to diminished self-consciousness, because (ideally) everyone present is similarly engaged" (28). Turino's celebration of this state seems to ignore the opportunity to see how engaged musical participation also operates as a window for other discourses (i.e., national, colonial, hegemonic, xenophobic) to be introduced to a group.[174] As such, Turino's (and perhaps Keil & Feld's) praise of participatory music operates under an assumption of unity rather than the fact of it—it is thus a

majority view, an uncritical assumption of the we-self. This lack of registering resistance or nuance ignores the minority voices left out of participation. Turino further notes that a key task of humans is to decide how we will differentiate or unite ourselves with the social discourses at work in our societies (104), but if they are absorbed at the sub-conscious level through group engagement in participatory states, have they even been identified? The presence of national discourse and framing exists in all of my case studies presented here, even (and especially) amongst traditions in the north seeking to address central Thai encroachment. The resistance is already couched within a national discursive frame. This is not to say it cannot be effective as such, but its presence should be identified, as should its entrance via participatory practice.

For the northern Thai community group of Suan Dawk, the perceived power of participation is broader than the immediate, visible group. *Khru* Tom insisted that (or, to put it in Benedict Anderson's terms, *imagined* that) other northerners from all over were also singing and dancing, maybe not in the exact same moment in general space-time (phenomenon) but certainly with the same instance of music space-time (normenon). All northerners were thus running through the same progression, mouthing the same words, and dancing in step *somewhere* in the surrounding provinces. The power of participatory music and social synchrony extended to the imagined community, as long as that community was assumed to exist without faction.

Within Karen communities, participation was both promoted and resisted. Tradition was complicated by modern reimaginations and religious conservativism. For all the celebrated and anticipated unity promised by communal movement within focused flow states, especially at traditional funeral scenes, the institutional power of Karen Christianity rejects this venue while supplying its own alternatives, and traditionalist/animists reject the repurposing of funeral songs out of another brand of conservative religiosity. Multiple parties are thus left with their own

means for achieving flow, but not as a unified group. Activists with a foot in each camp, such as Chi Suwichan Phattanaphraiwan, seek to reconcile and unite them under a broader ethnic label, but this strategy is not without its contestations.[175] Here, too, flow unites people, but it is disrupted by objections, which themselves come from critical engagement with the text or context. The two poles—engaged participation with resulting loss of critical self versus analytical engagement with the subtext or message of the music—can dissolve the we-self.

Participatory frames do work particularly well for Lahu groups in Ban Musoe who continue to hold traditional new year dances (where Christians, who in this community are the minority, do allow themselves to nominally participate). Here, Csikszentmihalyi's stress on "enjoyment" of focused attention synchs up well with cultural demands for "fun" as Lahu groups gather for musical activity and enacted pan-village unity.

Where the participatory approach should make more room for nuance is in the Akha case. Here, the music is catchy, it inspires and accompanies dance (as in the *dehaw*), and it invites participation through antiphonal phrasing. Added to this is the underlying framework of Aju Jupoh's chosen genre. The "other" holds an aesthetic presence even as the "we-self" engages in participation. This idea, using the other's music to fashion a distinctive identity, is not new (see Bohlman 1989), but it is downplayed in Turino's participatory model that celebrates local, focused participation while ignoring the potential inroads made by the other as well as Csikszentmihalyi's mental processes that ignore the human and cultural capacity to organize sound differently —two streams may not necessarily be chaotic. All four cases presented here show that participatory music has power and potential, but not just to unite. Some groups divide over it. Others represent complicated relationships with the lowland and central powers they claim to bypass, ignore, or reject.

I began this project proposing that my analyses of the musical productions of local, indigenous, and ethnic groups on the margins of Thai national culture would counter the more dismissive conclusions of Jory (1999), Thongchai (1996), Jonsson (2001), and Ferguson (2010), all of whom surmised that localism was not revolutionary but rather was or would be co-opted by sold-out commercialism, dumbed-down populism, or state-permitted and state-framed multiculturalism. That local traditions and traditionalists have felt threatened by state policies, programs, and law enforcement is not questioned. I proposed that there was more to the responses and resistance, that the relevance of the state was fading as 21st-century means of organizing (here, music and media) offered para-national alternatives. In looking back, there is at work both the still-present state (in local memory, in programs of assimilation, and as communities look ahead) as well as local-to-global alternatives that, with or without knowledge or consent, are grounded in and appropriative of state-supplied communicative technology and discourse. State-evasion (or power-evasion more generally) is complicated by connections to the powers being resisted. Though the binary helps form these acts of distinction ("Thai" versus "us"), neither the "we-self" nor the "other" is capable of independence. This is evidenced by participatory music's imagined inclusion and exclusiveness: invasion forms and informs the self, as does evasion. Neither the state nor the nation are immediately jeopardized by local musico-political participation, but music remains a site for vocalizing and challenging state narratives even as the state resides unchallenged and overlooked due to the nature of participation. In that sense, the "Thai" value of *sanuk* (fun, enjoyment) should not be understated in terms of power. Enjoyment drives flow, motivates participants, and sidelines analytical reflexivity. As the politically turbulent Thai millennium continues with regular oustings of popularly-elected leaders and military takeovers, and the passing of long-standing monarch and national unifier His

Majesty Bhumibol Adulyadej (Rama IX, 1927-2016), future studies of Thai nationalism in music would do well to focus on whether the political leaders successfully position themselves through promoting or facilitating enjoyment. One of the first major acts of General Prayuth Chan-ocha after the 2014 *coup d'état* that ousted Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra was the composition, release, and promotion (via state-run media) of his song titled "Returning *Happiness* to the People" (emphasis mine).[176] The lyrics and music were rather uninspiring, but the awareness of the need for *sanuk* (fun) and *khuamsuk* (happiness) as an instrument of political legitimacy are paramount. Turino and Csikszentmihalyi's works suggest that messages encouraging participation are more effective when understated, as Trojan horses or "earmarks" rather than as overt policy and propaganda. For a national government that relies on the seriousness of "fun" (Jonsson 2001), participatory music and flow have much to offer our understanding of national, regional, and ethnic identity, power, and potential.

Enjoyment encourages participation, participation can lead to flow, and the flow state binds people together as a unisonant we-self. For a we-self to be effective and feelingfully experienced, the varied particulars (we) must be reduced and glossed into one general (self). The flow state's promise to do just that, to bring one into a status where the realized self falls by the wayside through engaged participation, makes possible the larger conglomerate, the felt community, the participatory we-self.

End Notes

[1] *Mueang* polities were the norm in pre-modern Southeast Asian governance. Set up in mandala style, a ruling administrator at the center would collect tribute from surrounding villages in exchange for protection and association. He, in turn, would pay allegiance to larger organizational centers in a centripetal satellite system that eventually led to the ultimate center where the king ruled. (See Holt 2009)

[2] In 2006, democratically elected populist Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra was ousted in a military coup (the Thai military swears allegiance to the king). "Yellow Shirt" royalist protestors shut down Suvarnabhumi airport, a project of Thaksin's, in 2008. Clashes between "Red shirt" protests and military police in Bangkok turned violent in 2010. Thaksin's sister, Yingluck, was elected Prime Minister in 2011 but was also ousted through a legal process in 2014. The country is currently led by an unelected military government that promises to "eventually" restore democracy.

[3] Forbes and Henly (1997) describe various myths associated with this time. They highlight the role of Mon Queen Chamadevi, who effectively "tamed" the Lawa, turning them from headhunters and swiddeners to settled, civilized, literacized lowlanders (25), thus emphasizing the triumph of the state over the forest, the civilized over the wild (a theme Scott takes on in his anarchist history).

[4] For example, Jane Ferguson's take on "Lanna Cowboys" and the use of 1970s American bluegrass and folk.

[5] The Young map is noteworthy as it shows the migration patterns of non-Thai highland groups, confirming the assumption in the 1970s that all "tribal" peoples were from elsewhere rather than recognizing any Karen as indigenous. Highlighted map from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Thailand_North_six_regions.png

[6] *Salaw Saw Sueng* is the quintessential "traditional" Lanna ensemble including the coconut spike fiddle (*salaw*), flute (*khlui*), and fretted lute (*sueng*). *Folksawng Khammueang* is a genre created by Jaran Manopetch, modeled on American folk music of Bob Dylan and Joan Baez of the 1970s, and holds similar political ideals (see Ferguson 2010; Akins and Bussakorn 2011). [see CD track 06]

[7] Morton (1976), Miller (1992), and Phra Chen Duriyanga (1948) "convert" stressed beats to 1 & 3 when writing Thai with western staff notation but retain the accent on beat 2 & 4 when using more indigenous models.

[8] For example, *Khru* Tom of the *Suan Dawk* community group took video of us doing a lesson together and posted it on Facebook. It was shared over 1,000 times and garnered thousands of *like*s. This boosted his credibility, sales, and reputation. Ja Thaw makes use of foreigners (including myself) to promote the New Year and the tour guide program. I have worked with Chi and Aju collaboratively on projects beyond my own research. I recognize that my *farang* status in Thailand earns attention and adds legitimacy, warranted or not, to many events and characters that appropriate it. Amporn noted this same concept at work in *Luk Thung* star Jonas Anderson, whose foreign presence and performance of the genre "authenticated" it as Thai (Amporn 2006:45).

[9] Funded by the Consortium for the Advanced Study of Thai (CAST).

[10] ขวัญใจพี่หลวง

[11] Note: All transcriptions in this paper are those of the author unless otherwise noted.

[12] Another coup d'état, the 12th since 1932, took place in 2014, and at the time of this writing, the military has yet to restore democratic rule.

[13] ชาติ ศาสนา พระมหากษัตริย์. See Walter Vella (1978).

[14] Translation by author

[15] The term "Lanna" here reflects a primarily northern Thai conception that tends to downplay Laotian and Burmese connections. Lanna is thus a consumable past and culture that is marketed in *Khantoke* dinner shows (Shahriari 2001: 83; Johnson 2014: 103-107), with hilltribe excursions and products, and mountain adventures/cool weather/ high-elevation products and plants (Johnson 2014:115). The consumable past in question is not the same as the historic kingdom that extended beyond modern national borders (33).

[16] Tom's last name, containing the prefix "Na," indicates the presence of royal ancestry. King Rama V famously had over 90 consorts and concubines, and his children were granted a surname to acknowledge this (i.e., a child of a consort in Chiang Mai would have the surname "Na Chiang Mai") (personal interview with Ajaan Ladda).

[17] See appendix 1 for a summary of interviews with local residents in Chiang Mai. My poll confirmed that *Long Mae Ping* still stands as the foremost song that represents traditional, local, northern music and identity.

[18] Thai education, under national curriculum standards, do allow for the incorporation of local knowledge, culture, and expression to make up 10% of the curriculum (see Odochao, Nakashima, and Vaddhanaphuti 119)

[19] A ceremony for one of the most well-known *salaw-saw-sueng* teachers in Chiang Mai (Akins 2013:78), where past students gathered to pay their respects and receive his blessing.
[20] A pedagogical system for sight-singing and ear training where each scale degree is assigned a syllable (i.e., DO RE ME FA SO LA TI)
[21] His life and experience during a time of intense nationalism is discussed in Deborah Wong's work (2001) as well as the 2004 film *The Overture* by Ittisoontorn Vichailak.
[22] Thai script represents the solfège system as follows: ด (Do), ร (Re), ม (Mi), ซ (Sol), ล (La).
[23] Note that in this translation to western music via transcription, I shifted the stressed rhythms to fall on beats 1 and 3 rather than the Thai conception of 2 and 4 representing the emphasized beat. This follows the lead of Terry Miller, whose transcriptions of Thai classical music employed this model to cater to the audience, or at least the expectations of an audience reading western staff notation and expecting an accented 1st and 3rd beat (Miller 1992: 198).
[24] Early songs were typically accompanied by acoustic guitar as well as traditional Lanna instruments (*sueng*, *salaw*, *klui*, *phin pia*, and others).
[25] *Kam Mueang* is the northern Thai word referring to the Lanna language.
[26] Many authors demonstrate instances of Bangkok's assessments of uncivilized northern expressions. Shahriari's history of the *Khantoke* dinner points out that Prime Minister Plaek Phibunsongkhram (1938-44; 1948-57) outlawed the dinner show due to the stigma surrounding sitting on the floor while eating (Shahriari 2001: 83). David Morton's translation of Dhanit Yupho's book on Thai instruments labels the northern *salaw* as a "crudely built" folk instrument that "does not have the refinement of other stringed instruments…bowed with a simple wooden bow…[and] plays instrumental versions of ordinary folk songs" (Dhanit 1971: 103-104). Many people interviewed in my survey (see appendix 1) described the meaning of *Long Mae Ping* as a cautionary tale to warn young Lanna women about the dangers of getting involved with Bangkok people who "look down on us."
[27] Woodhouse also provides a quote by King Mongkhut *Rama IV* (r.1851-1868), who decreed that anyone entering the palace in Bangkok had to put a shirt on, lest they be like the "lowly human beings" such as the "jungle people", Lawa, or Lao who go shirtless, exposing their sweat and skin diseases like "primitives" (Woodhouse 160).
[28] *Phra*: honorific title for monks. Also has other usage related to Buddha images and religious leaders.
[29] Instruments in northern Thai music: *sueng* (plucked, fretted chordophone), *salaw* (bowed spiked lute with coconut resonator), *joi saw* (improvised singing style in *khammueang* language), *phin* (short for *phin pia*, the coconut stick zither discussed by McGraw and Dyck earlier).
[30] Mae Raming is another name for the Ping river (Wyatt 33).
[31] Though the sunflowers were introduced by western missionaries in the early 20th century, they stand now as iconic to the northern landscape.
[32] I have been in many car rides over the summit of Doi Monjong (1,929 meters above sea level) during the winter months where the morning fog brings down the visibility and the temperature considerably. The most common comment I hear in this situation is, "Oh! This is like Switzerland!" Johnson confirms that this pairing of Chiang Mai's cold weather to European sensibility is a common occurrence and lends modern cache to the north as international, foreign, and/or cosmopolitan (2014: 100)
[33] Museum descriptions and personal interviews frequently emphasized the fact that, though Dararasmi was initially just a consort to Rama V, she was later promoted to wife under the title "Phra Raja Jaya Dara Rasmi" and said to be one of Chulalongkorn's favorite wives (Sarassawadee 187). Woodhouse's dissertation on the Chiang Mai princess (2009) shows how the "foreigner" in the court of Bangkok was hostage, diplomat, and an icon for "civilized" Bangkok harem members to compare themselves to in confirming ethnic qualities *via* the other.
[34] Another piece of Lanna repertoire learned early on by beginners is "*Noi Chaiya.*" At the Sao Inthakhin festival, local artist Khamla Thanyaphawn introduced the song as "the love story between Dararasmi and King Rama V." Woodhouse places the play (written by Dara herself) as a response to Narathip's *Sao Khruea Fa*: *Noi Chaiya* features a much stronger female character than the tragic and helpless *Sao Khruea Fa* (Woodhouse 183). Dararasmi composed the play and the music with the help of *Thao* (honorific title given by Rama V) Sunthorn Phajonakit (1863-1897), the main royal poet of King Inthanon. He wrote *saw* and other types of poetry. *Noi Chaiya* was one of his most famous collaborations with Dararasmi, and they supposedly met at the banks of the river at Huay Kaew Waterfall to compose the piece (see CMU northern Thai information center, http://library.cmu.ac.th/ntic/onlinemusic_show.php?musicid=30).

[35] Renard mentions that Naradhip consulted with Dararasmi in writing the story, which featured northern music, costume, and customs, adding to a growing romanticized image of Chiang Mai by Bangkok starting in the early 1900s, comparing Bangkok's view of Chiang Mai to France's utilization of the South Pacific (92; see also Woodhouse 180-182). Dararasmi eventually went on to promote the play in the north after returning there following Chulalongkorn's death (93). The play was turned into a movie in 1952, 1965, and 1980, and later was adapted into a *lakhorn thorathat* (Thai TV soap opera) in 1971, 1991, and 1996.

[36] The top of Huay Kaew Waterfall is also known as *Wang Bua Ban* (the Palace of Bua Ban).

[37] These varying stories were compiled by a researcher/blogger at the crowd-sourced journalism site *OK Nation*, a self-described "Citizen Reporter Social Networking Group" in Thailand. See วังบัวบาน...อีกตำนานรักเศร้าสาวเชียงใหม่. http://oknation.net/blog/print.php?id=321111.

[38] Bua Ban is mentioned in other northern songs cited, too (see appendix 1). One example is Kulab Wieng Phing, a song praising the beauty of the northern rose and warning Chiang Mai women not to be cheated by foreign men as was Bua Ban (See transcription in appendix).

[39] I overheard many murmurings about unsightly grand stupas, funded by the Central Thai government and placed on iconic and sacred sites (such as Doi Inthanon, where the small forest shrine housing interned remains of King Inthawichayanon used to be the highest man-made object on Thailand's tallest mountain until H.M. Rama IX funded the erection of two massive stupas in 1987 and 1992 nearby that trumped it in size and elevation).

[40] A red pickup truck fitted with two bench seats that serve as a sort of cheap, communal taxi. It is a staple of Chiang Mai's urban landscape (and also rumored to have a powerful underhand influence in local politics and decisions affecting tourist sites and development).

[41] For example, central Thai consonants "r", "kh", "th", and "ch" become "h", "k", "t", and "j", respectively.[41] Thus, "we love", "*rao rak,"* becomes "*hao hak*." Other popular words and pronouns also mark regional distinction. Women say and sing the polite ending "*jao*" instead of the central formality *"kha*," and men are referred to as "*Ai*" instead of the central Thai *khun, phom,* and so on.

[42] Shahriari (2001:4-5) notes that this label is not without its problems, and tends to be used not as an ethnic term but as a regional one, and one that only encompasses the Lanna region within the modern borders of Thailand. Ethnic groups within this region/label still use other terms to denote their actual ethnic identity (i.e., Shan, Mon, Lao, Khon Mueang, etc…). In most cases, as noted by Eriksen and Moerman (Eriksen 2011), ethnic identity is performed: to be Khon mueang or to identify as Lanna-Thai is to speak, act, and perform local identity in an acceptable way. Ethnic labels do not always match experience just as the regional scope of Thailand's "Lanna" identity does not match the historical bounds of the Lanna kingdom.

[43] Sarassawadee takes time to assert Mangrai's multicultural society, portraying him as a charismatic ruler whose power attracts and concentrates varying and contrasting people and sacred objects into his domain as proof of his power, in line with Benedict Anderson's work on "centripetality" (1972:32). Sarassawadee specifically mentions the indigenous *Lua* people of the *Doi Suthep* mountain range, saying, "It has already been noted that Mangrai often received assistance from the indigenous people" (40). I read these statements with contemporary and recent history in mind. Ronald Renard's PhD dissertation (1980) on Karen history in Thailand points out the fluid and reciprocal relations between highland Karen people in the north and *Khon Mueang* residents of the lowland Lanna kingdom. This relationship was severed rather unceremoniously, though, as Central Thai rule replaced Lanna governance and these new administrators (appointed by Bangkok) launched assimilation and conversion campaigns to settle and civilize highlanders as part of the modern Thai nation of the 20th century. That being said, though, Lanna "multiculturalism" was not necessarily without hierarchy, as ideas about the indigenous Lawa people (called wild cannibals, among other labels) eventually extended to the highland dwellers.

[44] B.J. Terwiel, in comparing the now-ubiquitous city pillars all across Thailand from north to south, notes that Chiang Mai's pillar is the only to use the term "Inthakhin" (the rest use the Thai *lak mueang*). He draws links to Indic-Pali god Indra to argue for a greater influence from Burma (Terwiel 166).

[45] This movement by Bangkok to manage the forests came to severely affect the ethnic groups dwelling in the mountains. Renard (1980) demonstrates that the Karen enjoyed favorable relations with Lanna rulers but were not dealt with fairly once the forestry department began to intervene in the management of the previously unadministered hills. This action and its results will be explored in the following chapters.

[46] Even today, the Governor of Chiang Mai province is not elected but appointed by the Ministry of the Interior (Johnson 2011: 516). In Omkoi, where I served as a Peace Corps volunteer, I worked in the office of a sub-district administrative organization (SAO) with a locally-elected *Nayok* (Mayor), but the *nai amphoe* (district head) was appointed, as was the financial administrator of the SAO (thus, all disbursements of state funds went through the

appointed rather than elected official). See the Lahu chapter for more on how these policies are felt at the village level.

[47] In the spirit of northern resistance to Bangkok's centralization, much attention is given to *Khruba* Sriwichai (1878-1937), a rebellious monk from Lamphun with a wide following who continued to lead parishioners even after being stripped of his certification from the centrally administrated *Sangha*. He was even detained for insubordination. Sarasawadee describes him as symbolizing "the last wave of opposition to administrative reform in Lanna" (213), and Yoko Hayami (2004) dedicates an entire chapter to his legacy in her research on Karen religious movements. When I was doing my fieldwork in Chiang Mai, I passed through Lamphun several times to see a massive fundraising effort to construct a very large monument of Sriwichai.

[48] Turino points to music's effective indexical power, noting that the "Wedding March" in western societies, even when heard outside the context, calls to mind (or *indexes*) experience, memory, and emotion attached to weddings (*object*) (8).

[49] As Christopher Small would say, it moved from an abstract concept of "music" to an involved and participatory scene of "musicking" (9).

[50] Cited here by Csikszentmihalyi: Durkheim, Emile. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life.* New York: Free Press, 1912 (1967).

[51] A few program notes about the song: This song was written in 1952 by Sanit Siriwisut, a Chiang Mai songwriter. Recorded for the first time in 1960, sung by Charin Nanotnakhorn [Chiang Mai artist born 1933, singer, and actor. Awarded title of "national artist" in 2000], Nithat Saawngsi [Chiang Mai *Luk Krung* Singer], and Busaya Rangsi [1940-2010, female *luk krung* singer, famous for song Namtadao น้ำตาดาว] at the Thai Airways recording studios for the Northerners Association of Thailand (NAT, or *Samakhom Chao Nuea*) [est. 1936], which had Mr. Sa-ad Piyawan [1926-2013, born in Lampang, studied in the US, elected member of parliament (5 terms)] as its leader during that time (Aphichanathong, n.d.)

[52] Peter Wade (2000) puts this idea to the musical test in *Music, Race, and Nation*. He concludes the book with a statement on radio broadcasts: "…in harnessing to their personal and collective projects, people did not only talk: they could listen to the music, imagine others listening to it, and imagine themselves in different places and conditions listening to it…" (238).

[53] Seeger introduces "normenon" here to distinguish it from "phenomenon." I.e., not a one-time act but a regular/continuous experience or label.

[54] Turino describes music in national history in Zimbabwe, where family festivals and the feelings associated with them were superimposed onto nationalist rally atmospheres, fusing national and emotional sentiment to the point where family holiday songs inspired recollections of the nation (2000: 180).

[55] "Chi" is his given Karen name (meaning "small"), which is not acknowledged by the Thai government, which demanded his parents register him with a Thai name. Thus, Suwichan Phattanaphraiwan is his legal name.

[56] The museum at one point housed a research library in conjunction with the Tribal Research Institute (once housed at Chiang Mai University), but it was still under construction in 2015 as the previous exhibit had reportedly burned down a few years earlier.

[57] Ronald Renard's PhD dissertation addresses the history of the Karen *before* Bangkok became involved in governing the region formally ruled by Lanna royalty and nobility, and shows that the Karen (and other highland groups) had a much more *laissez-faire* attitude toward highland matters than would the incoming Central Thai governors of the 20th century (1980).

[58] *Keng* is the Thai transliteration of the Hmong *qeej*, a free-reed aerophone with six pipes, also known as the *lusheng* in China (See Falk 2003: 23).

[59] I find the use of *"et cetera"* to be a curious statement that adeptly demonstrates the glossing effect used in state narratives about the highlanders. The "hill tribe problem" here is assumed, lumped together, a catch all for whatever is going on "up there" that is beyond comprehension, outside of Thai norms, and destructive to the nation's property.

[60] Transcript of excerpts from the welcoming video at the Tribal Museum, recorded June 29, 2015. This is a mandatory video that all guests must watch before they can enter the exhibits.

[61] A follow up to such statement might be the self-confidence of the state: since "hill tribes" have problems (or *are* the problem), any solution could not fully include them but would rather see the state as holding the responsibility to fix, civilize, develop, or advance them.

[62] Forbes and Henley point to similar civilizing narratives in the tales of the founding of Chiang Mai, where 9th century Mon princess Chamadevi of Haripunchai (Lamphun) effectively civilizes the cannibalistic, forest-dwelling indigenous Lawa people of Doi Kham by tricking their leader, Viranga, into wearing a hat made from her

underwear. After Viranga's loss of power, the Lawa were converted to Buddhism and wetland rice cultivation, and came out of the mountains into the lowlands (1997: 25).

[63] In Thai: ชาวเขา; *khao*, or เขา, means "mountain" or "them/you."

[64] Kwanchewan quotes an official at the closing of the TRI in 2002, who argued, "there is no need for further study on the 'hill tribes' as they are now considered to have become Thai; thus '*chao khao'*…becomes '*chao rao"*' (380).

[65]I see no need to make claims as to any supposed "genuineness" in conversion, but scholars have elsewhere observed such conversion stories as opportunist, calling converts "Rice Bowl Christians" for the real and perceived benefits obtained via access to global networks of power, money, and opportunity (Kammerer 1990: 286; Waldron 325). Missionary Paul Dodge wrote, concerning a Karen sect in Telakhon (Lampang province) to the south of Chiang Mai, "These people are searching not for God so much as for Progress" (5). Regardless of the motivation, there are real opportunities that become present through association with a larger organizing agency, and Chair has tapped into that here.

As a further note as to my own positionality regarding Christianity among the Karen, I see it as an interesting phenomenon worth studying, and, in agreement with Keyes (2003: 214) and Hayami (2004), I note that no study of "the Karen" gives a full picture of "the Karen" unless Christianity is accounted for, as contact with missionaries is in many ways (but of course not fully) credited for formulating the notion of a Karen nation or people (for example, see Hovemyr 1989; Marshall 1922: 296; Hayami 2004: 30). I am not an evangelist-ethnographer as were Harry Marshall (among the Karen) or Paul and Elain Lewis (among the Akha), though I do have many contacts within and because of the Karen faith communities that I have worked with, both in development projects as a Peace Corps Volunteer and my ethnographic work with many Karen people, including Chi Suwichan Phattanaphraiwan (himself a practicing Christian and academic). Chi himself is rather critical of the Karen Baptist church and its role in transforming Karen culture and belief, and I would describe his work as more activist when it comes to engaging with Christianity whereas my ethnographic work on Karen Christianity is less aimed at bringing about change within the Karen community in terms of ethnic self-(e)valuation.

[66] Andrew Walker (2001) suggested that this point has been largely swept under the rug in contemporary discourse on the Karen. Their recent role as the eco-friendly Indigenous people of Chiang Mai promoted by human rights and cultural advocates such as Johni Odochao and Chi Suwichan Phattanaphraiwan and their foreign supporters (as presented in the 2003 Delang text) paint a picture of traditional forestry management that showed unadulterated respect for mother nature from time immemorial, as it were (See Odochao 2006 or Suwichan 2014, for example). Walker suggests opening a conversation where Karen logging activities in the late 1800s-early 1900s might be addressed or acknowledged as part of a larger scheme of recognizing a wider diversity of Karen identity (rather than the deterministic and narrow fixed label of eco-friendly Karen).

[67] The name Ban Tong Luang itself has some resonance with one of the first tribal studies sponsored by the Department of Public Welfare, Ministry of the Interior—a review of the hunter-gatherers of Nan province who were labeled *phi tong luang* (Spirits of the Yellow Leaves). In this study from 1962, Kraisri and Hertland-Swann went searching for the legendary yet unverified jungle people in Nan province who wore no clothes and subsisted by foraging. Being unable to locate such a people, Kraisri concluded that "It seems clear in fact that the name *Phi Tong Luang* is a name invented by the Thai and used indiscriminately to refer to any unfamiliar people who inhabit the deeper parts of the jungle and who are not members of any recognised hill-tribe or known local community" (167). Thus, it was another case of the center establishing the we-self in relation to an other.

[68] Tourists from mainland China have increased considerably since the 2012 movie *Lost in Thailand*, which was filmed in Chiang Mai. They were much less apprehensive when it came to sitting down for photographs with residents at each display. On the whole, though, both the Chinese tourists of late and the Thai tour companies have been largely unprepared for each other, leading to some rather bitter feelings on the part of Chiang Mai residents towards encroaching PRC tour groups (Frederickson 2014).

[69] The Honda *Nova* is apparently a source of humor in its association with the rural poor (the V transcribed here according to pronunciation as a W). Yosthana, a Karen man I interviewed, explained that while riding a *Nova* in (or to!) the city is extremely embarrassing and *lo-so* (a "Thai-glish" [Thai-English] slang word, meaning the opposite of "high society"), it has some clout in the village because it is relatively *than samai*, or modern, in that it is gas-powered and loud. Though it is laughable to urbanites as the cheapest brand, rural Karen communities see the possession of one as proof of entering modernity. Tue Pho mentions the *Nova* in many of his songs (including a story of a destitute Karen man who is too poor to afford even a *Nova*, see appendix), and it usually brings a smirk to the face of any informed Karen listener (Personal Interview).

[70] "Gru" and "Na" are described as the first two notes played on the tehnaku in Chi Suwichan's first book, and they serve as initial vocables for most songs accompanied by the tehnaku (Suwichan 2011: 23; also MacLachlan 2014: 74).

[71] This date refers to the Karen in Thailand rather than Burma. Harry Marshall's seminal ethnography of the Karen (1922) shows how hymn singing especially became popular by the late 19th century there. While there were a few missions to the Karen in Kanchaburi (see Hovemyr 1989), the Karen in Thailand were most heavily evangelized beginning in the 1950s.

[72] The colloquial and good-humored reports in the *Thailand Tatler* centered on a few key geographic areas in the early years. For Bangkok, the articles followed a Chinese congregation. In Chiang Mai, the Karen were the primary subjects of evangelization, medical assistance, hygiene programs, literacy, and agricultural training— or, as missionary Bob Coats put it, "Shots, Teeth, and Bass Fiddles" (1963: 6). With the exception of some minor exploratory trips to unreached villages, most of the early activities and reports focused on Musikee [Muejekhi, Chi's hometown] in Mae Jaem district, the Center for Uplift of Hill People just outside of Chiang Mai city at the base of Doi Suthep, and a community in Mae Sariang on the northwestern border along the Salween River.

[73] To clarify, the actual "Songs of Memory" exhibit and accompanying book, both by Victoria Vorreiter, are not my focus in this section. Instead, I draw from the public talks given by invited guest artist Chi Suwichan Phattanaphraiwan about his experience growing up Karen in Thailand.

[74] I have translated both of these works in the process of researching Chi and his musical endeavors. The English translation of *I am Tehnaku* was published in 2015 and published through Sangsilp Printing, Ltd. of Chiang Mai.

[75] Elsewhere I have expressed my gratitude to the East-West Center for providing a fellowship for me to obtain my MA in ethnomusicology at the University of Hawai'i, but it is worth repeating this appreciation here.

[76] This area is spelled Musikee in Christian reports such as the *Thailand Tatler*, but Chi prefers this spelling. Loo Shwe refers to it as "Musechi" in his text (2006: 54).

[77] This was indeed the case for Karen elder Porlajee Rakchongcharoen, also known as Billy, who mysteriously disappeared as he was preparing a legal case against the Thai forestry policy of evicting indigenous communities accused of squatting, poaching, and logging in protected national forests (or, from the Karen perspective, for living, hunting for sustenance, and harvesting bamboo and lumber for building a traditional dwelling on traditional lands occupied since before the intrusion of Thai forestry management). Chi included a song for Billy on his latest album. In a previous album, he sang about elder *Phati* Punu, who left his village to protest in Bangkok after the official eviction notice came through the Ministry of Agriculture in 1997 issued by Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai [1992-95, 1997-2001]. Chi immortalized him in a song, *Punu Dawk Jimu*, which later became a theme song for the Karen Network for Culture and Environment (Suwichan 2014: 42-48; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XIAmcaftk_k).

[78] This idea of "benign" cultural display fits with what Patrick Jory (1999), Thongchai Winichakul (1995), and Jane Ferguson (2010) say about regionalism and music: it is marketable or coopted by market forces rather than politically suspect. Johnson (2014: 104) suggests that the tourist-oriented *khantok* dinner and dance shows in Chiang Mai serve as a prime example of this consumable culture. I believe Chi's work is attempting to make it more than this.

[79] Roland Mischung (2003) and Christina Fink (2003) both describe these as 7-syllable couplets typically sung at funerals, where attendees circumambulate the corpse (also see Suwichan 2014), *Thra* Loo Shwe (2006: 6-9) and Esther Dangpongpee (2002; Personal interview) both went about collecting these to mine them for possible Christian connections or uses, and Yoko Hayami notes that these sayings and stories are moldable, saying, "I found that Karen narrate legends to explain what takes place here and now, adapting parts of the story to the immediate context and purpose" (2004: 29). Chi asserts that every *tha* has seven possible interpretations (Personal Interview).

[80] The cheapest public transportation to and from Chiang Mai city from the outlying areas comes in the form of blue buses known as "*rot mail*" [the "L" is silent], which are, slow, loud, old, and produce plenty of exhaust.

[81] As ceremonies were family occasions and the family spirit, or *bgha*, was a composite of all individual *k'la* (spirits), one member's absence (especially a female's, since society was matrilineally organized) would spell disaster for the efficacy of the ritual (Marshall 248).

[82] To clarify, I translated *I am Tehnaku* from Thai to English, but there are many passages where Chi gives the Karen text transcribed into Thai script. Thus, he is translating Karen to Thai, and I am translating his Thai script to English. My Romanization of the Karen, then, is drawn from the transliteration of Thai and does not make use of existing Karen Romanization systems.

[83] This transcription was created from Chi's performance of the song on the accompanying VCD that came with the 2011 book.

[84] All quotations of *Forbidden Songs* are my own translation, which is at the time of writing not published. Quotes from *I am Tehnaku*, however, are from the published translation (2015).

[85] Yoko Hayami notes that "The more prominent and outspoken members of the hill communities tended to be the educated Christian elite, for whom being Karen was a conscious matter of identity" (2004: 2-3). Chi certainly fits this profile. The gloss term "Christian," of course, has been scrutinized, especially as it differs between Catholic and Protestant communities, the latter tending to be much less tolerant of carryover of traditional beliefs and practices (see Tapp 1989: 87; Platz 2003: 483-484; Keyes 1996: 283-286). But Chi is not a typical Christian Karen (if there is such a thing). He regularly criticizes the influence of Christian dogma as it has been applied to Karen cultural practice (especially with foreign audiences), and he has faced plenty of internal opposition from leaders in his community. As he describes in *Forbidden Songs,*

> *As time evolved and changed, more days came where* Tha *and Karen cultural music were changing to become of secondary importance in Karen Christian communities. I reiterate:* Christian *Karen communities.*
>
> *"But you are Christian." Others tease me.*
>
> *"Yes! I am Christian. That is why I know what happened to* Tha *and Karen cultural music in these Christian Karen communities," I answer.* (2014: 32)

[86] Both translations were made possible with significant assistance from Ajaan Yuphaphann Hoonchamlong at the University of Hawai'i, and research funding was provided by the John Young Foundation. I am greatly indebted to both for their support.

[87] As noted earlier, *Pgak'nyaw* is the Sgaw Karen self-referential term, meaning "us" or more generally "humans." Outsiders and foreigners, especially white foreigners, were referred to as *kola* (or *kola wa*, where *wa* means "white"). I use *Pgak'nyaw* when quoting Chi's texts here but retain the English "Karen" throughout the remainder.

[88] Sujit's text is (1-8) a rather provocative critique of Thai musicology, which, in line with Chi's tactics, outlines a classic myth about the bottle gourd first as a metaphor transitioning to a sharper critique. Sujit argues that "Thai" music should be studied as part of a larger, pan-national music of the *Suwannaphum* region with connections to Laos, Burma, and Cambodia. Yet Thai academics limit "Thai" music to central Thailand's classical music, ignoring connections to other countries (see Miller and Sam-Ang 1995) as well as "folk" traditions of the diverse regions of the country in favor of confirming artificially-created national borders of distinction (much in line with Thongchai's work 1994). "Thai" music is thus represented as classical *piphat*, with only minor recognition of Isan's *maw lam*, Lanna *salaw-saw-sueng*, and Southern *Nora* theatre. Non-Thai ethnic groups (i.e., Chinese in Bangkok, Akha, Hmong, Karen, Mien, Lahu, Malay, and others) receive even less mention in this discourse.

Bringkhop's article (9-15) is a heavily illustrated piece outlining the classification of the tehnaku according to the Sachs-Hornbostel system (1961) as an arched harp with connections, ancestors, and/or offshoots into Angkor, Borneo, and India.

[89] The orphan is a favored character in Karen lore. He is oppressed, mistreated, and forgotten, yet also hardworking and honest. He usually serves as a metaphor for the Karen people as a whole (see Marshall 22, 26; Hayami 2004: 26-27; Hovemyr 5-6).

[90] Another traditional practice is commonly pointed to: when a baby is born to a Karen family, the parents will place the umbilical cord into a bamboo joint and tie it to a tree in the forest. The tree becomes linked with the human's spirit and it can never be chopped down (Blady, personal interview). This cultural practice is usually pointed to as proof of forest preservation tied inextricably to Karen custom.

[91] This kind of adoption and adaption of foreign materials into Karen musical practice has long been observed as the norm (Stern and Stern 209), even by authors that lament it and see it as a "decline" of tradition (Renard 1991; Marshall 1922)

[92] For Christian communities, the struggle over the tehnaku has been linked to its roots in animist ritual (Suwichan 2014), and for non-Christian communities, the neglect has had more to do with modernity, development, and the idea of getting rid of practices deemed old-fashioned or backward (Chair, personal interview).

[93] There is no one standard Romanized spelling for this term. Sometimes it is spelled "hta," other times as "Tha" or "Ta." I use "tha" in accordance with my rules for Romanizing Thai script, as Chi Suwichan spells it in Thai with an aspirated "t" consonant ("th"). Thus, unless I am quoting another's text, I maintain the spelling throughout as "tha."

[94] Marshall, Shwe, and Fink all point to an aspect of funerals that surprised the early missionaries: funerals were festive occasions and were very much enjoyed by the young people, so much so that, reportedly, bored young people

would sit around and wonder aloud when the next elder would hurry up and pass away so that they could meet some suitors and have a good time. Here, too, singing was a significant part of finding a potential mate.

[95] Muejekhi, or "Musikee," is frequently cited in the diary of Rev. Alfred Van Benschoten, one of the earliest western missionaries assigned to Chiang Mai by the American Baptist mission. His hand-drawn maps of the area indicate that in 1952, the congregation boasted 126 Christians (14). He also noted somewhat of an independent spirit of the Karen church there, which had left the Church of Christ in Thailand, saying, "The Karen are far more association conscious as far as their Christian effort is concerned than they are church conscious" (36). He is neither the first nor the last to note of the connections between Karen ethnic identity/nationalism and the organizational capacity of Christian conversion and association (I.e., Hovemyr 1989; Hayami 2004; Keyes 1979).

[96] Such stories are common. Chi also points to another Karen artist, Suwichanon Ratanaphimol, who included a final refrain from the tha *plue* in a song titled "Soe le" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ee05u9uOJNo). Suwichanon's daughter passed away within months of the album being released, and some in his community pointed to this song as the primary culprit (2014: 52).

[97] At a Karen Christmas festival we attended in 2008, I was called up on stage and given an electric guitar fitted with a distortion pedal and asked by the band to provide screaming guitar solos "in the style of *Scorpion,* if you please." After this, a Swiss missionary couple was called up to play a hymn with a penny whistle. Finally, the leadership asked us to sing "Silent Night" in multiple languages simultaneously. Lisa and I sang in English while the Swiss man sang in German and his wife sang in Karen, all in four-part harmony. Stern and Stern note that this demand for and showcasing of the exotic is not just a Karen preference but a general theme of Southeast Asian authorities, saying, "The Karen behave in the same eclectic fashion as have the court centers of historic southeast Asia…which came to incorporate the styles of captive and vassal musicians" (209). Miller and Jarernchai (1994) point to western explorers, missionaries, and administrators describing the court of Ayutthaya resounding with Khmer, Chinese, Japanese, and Malay music (32). Wong (1998) shows that Mon musical instruments were adored by Siamese royalty and showcased in funeral processions. Trimillos (1992) argues that the Christian *Payson* has become localized theater in the Philippines just as the Indian epic *Ramayana* has been adopted in many Southeast Asian nations. Tara Alberts (2013) shows that exchange was the norm in early modern SE Asia, and foreign ideas, musical idioms, and religious art were all woven into local narratives and expression, even to millennialist ends (Ileto 1979; Tapp 1989).

[98] Chi does not give the exact date, but it seems to have occurred in the early 80s, since Chi's performance in the same church community happens about a decade later when he is an early teenager.

[99] *Phati* is a generalized Karen title used to address collateral kin (see Rajah 2008: 58, 100)

[100] This idea of a great Karen civilization in the region where the Lanna Kingdom would sprout up was echoed by Loo Shwe in his introduction, where he claimed his people could and should have pride in their once-great civilization. He quotes Presbyterian Minister William Dodd, author of *The Thai Race, Elder Brother of the Chinese* in 1923 (heavily criticized by scholars later), who claimed a Karen kingdom existed as early as 6 BCE in the region (Shwe 1-4). In Shwe's telling, the Karen were driven to the hills by the southward migrating Tai people. The origin of "the Karen" is still unverified, especially since the moment "they" began to think of "themselves" as a distinct race, nation, or unified cultural unit is a modern adaptation to intercultural and global realities (Keyes 2003).

[101] He also refers to this idea in *I am Tehnaku*, where he lists one of his international performances as:

> **Burma 2004.** Pathein city in the Irrawaddy and the city of Yangon. A festival to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the translation of the Holy Bible into Pgak'nyaw. No less than 50,000 *Lawa*-speaking people from around the world came to exchange cultures during the evenings. Chi attended on behalf of the Pgak'nyaw Baptist Christians of Thailand. (106-107)

Here, Chi seems to be lumping the Karen together with the Lawa linguistically, even though the two groups were not quite intelligible (Obayashi 1963: 206). Karen languages have been historically difficult to place firmly into any category, sometimes marked with an asterisk as the only Sino-Tibetan language with an SVO syntax (Matisoff 1991: 481-482). Chi's connection of the two groups is tied to the shared oppression from the *Yo* people, though. Hovemyr summarizes this idea in his work on Karen nationalism, saying Karen ethnic identity is not a matter of common language or culture but of a common past experience of oppression, marginalization, persecution, and exploitation (5).

[102] While the entire song is in Karen, this spoken section is translated from *Phati'*s original speech into Thai. This is for the benefit of any Thai listeners and ensures they don't miss the meaning.

[103] These multiple and compounded meanings indexed within one condensed musical unit are discussed by Turino elsewhere, where he coins the term "Semantic snowball effect" to draw attention to the multi-layered meanings indexed in one participatory icon (2000: 176).

[104] The full 8:13 song is up at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=He_l_SPgi1Q as compared to the 7:00-minute https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XIAmcaftk_k (here, just the first few seconds of the *tha* can be heard).

[105] On one occasion, he played "Punu Dawkjimu" for a Christian audience, expeciting them to shut the song down at the Tha *Yo* section, but there was no objection. He surmises that they were so far removed from tradition that they didn't even know what the Tha was (2014:47).

[106] This 'uniting power' of Thai Christian language and culture, where various highland populations come together for Christian gatherings (services, festivals, cultural exchanges) with Thai serving as *lingua franca* led Peter Kunstadter to the proposition of a new ethnic identity in northern Thailand: "Christian Hilltribe" (1983).

[107] On this note, Andaya's work on drums and cannon (2011) as well as Wong's "more is more" notion of music and power (1998) provides a good venue for exploring the rise of Karen death metal and other similar genres. This is paired with Christianity, too. At a Karen Christmas festival in 2008, my wife and I were offered a room to sleep in with a TV playing high-octane songs of On the Cross, a Christian Karen death metal band. When I asked what it was about the songs that appealed, the answer always came back to the notion of "power."

[108] It is not *than samai* (does not keep up with the times).

[109] Included in the accompanying audio is "Goenyathaw", a song from this album addressing Christianity and Karen cultural preservation [CD track 14].

[110] In my MA thesis I discuss the history of negotiated encounters between white, Bible-carrying missionaries and the famous Karen legend of the white brother and the golden book, arguing that Karen scholars (Shwe 2006; Dangpongpee 2002) have tried to bridge tradition and Christianity, reframing both to the point that Christianity is localized and seen as non-exogenous (Fairfield 2012).

[111] I.e., Thai New Year and the beginning and ending of Buddhist lent, respectively.

[112] "Fun" of course is similar to the "performative" idea of musical, or holiday engagement. That is, it is distinct from the mundane and temporarily abolishes ordinary life (Huizinga 1949: 12-13)

[113] Walker elaborates on the linguistic breakdown of the Loloish (or "Yi") branch of this language family that houses the Akha (southern), Lahu, and Lisu (both central Loloish) groups. Classifying Karen has proven more difficult (Walker 1992:45).

[114] Spielman (1952) goes through lengths to address the problems of labeling and mislabeling, and the somewhat irrelevant coding by colors (red, yellow, black). For example, Thais referred to Lahu Sheleh as "*Musoe dam*" (*dam* meaning "black" in Thai), which was a different group from the Lahu Na (*Na* meaning "black" in Lahu). His overall message was one of uncertainty in classification, with identity performed, perhaps, with clothing style or color (322). His map labels Omkoi populations as Sheleh rather than Na, but he alludes to one theory that Sheleh is just a Lahu Nyi term for Na (324). This ethnic sub-grouping hairsplitting of the 60s seems to be less of a concern in later ethnographies.

[115] Pine (2008) also notes that the Lahu she has worked with see "Lahuness" as a "practice" rather than a "state of being" (228) that goes beyond a shared language to a shared past. Still the distinctions from village to village made for an odd project in terms of classification, which was part of the reason Jones (1967; 1971) was so adamant that they should not be labeled a "tribe" as it implies a degree of isolation, self-sustenance, and communal solidarity. In fact, he found that Lahu communities varied significantly in economic activities, religious practices, and were in constant contact with other highland groups as well as lowland market-based activities. Lahu identity was as shifting and positional as was Leach's Kachin communities (1965).

[116] As outlined in chapter 2, Lanna was in a transition from suzerainty to submission to central rule by Bangkok at the end of the 1800s as Chulalongkorn (Rama V) consolidated and modernized the borders. Thus, the first Lahu entered the space of the kingdom of Siam, or perhaps Lanna, not "Thailand." Thongchai (1994) discusses an incident in this period as the "Franco-Siamese Crisis of 1893" (97-101), where Siam and other great centers of power fought over tributary states (Chiang Saen, Chiang Tung, and others) in an attempt to solidify newly-established borders as demanded by the French. The incoming Lahu populations had no central authority, states, or political organization, preferring to stay at high elevations that were inaccessible to lowland authority structures. Their small villages were thus not on the radar of great powers interested in consolidating lowland tributary states.

[117] *Guisha* is the supreme (male) deity recognized by all the various Lahu sub-groups. The New Year dance is done in his honor (Walker 1984). On one excursion with Lahu and Karen guides, languages were compared, and much ado was made about the possible connections between the two ancient belief systems. Ja Sa put forth the Lahu term

for the supreme deity (*Guisha*), which perked the ears of Sak, who noted the Karen indigenous term for the highest sacred being as *Ge Sa (Yua)*—though most Christian Karen today have adopted just the last part, Yua, as it seemed to share links to the Judeo-Christian *Yah Weh* (Renard 1980: 34; Hayami 2004: 28; Shwe 6). These types of exchanges of linguistic knowledge were a typical topic of conversation around the hearth fires in homes I stayed in throughout my fieldwork, evidencing Jones' observations of highland constant contact between various groups—Karen, Lahu, Lisu, Akha, northern Thai, and the occasional Chinese trader (Jones 1971; also see Walker 1992: 404).

[118] Walker describes "merit day" ceremonies (*shi nyi*), where all households in the village bring a handful of a rice and a cupful of water to central stores of the village priests. These "mixed rice" and "mixed water" collections briefly "symbolize" village unity (184: 279).

[119] However "the Lahu" are organized or not organized, the notion of greater political ethnic organization is virtually non-existent according to Pine (230), even though, like other highland *a*literate groups, the "returning" of a writing system by western missionaries offers this possibility via faith-based affiliation. Literacy myths in among highland communities in Southeast Asia typically speak to the "loss" of literacy and its eventual return or reclamation, sometimes accompanied by a return of civilization or socio-political power (Scott 2009; also Jones 1967: 88-89 for the Lahu). Nishimoto (2015: 6-8) asserts that this Christian Lahu milieu resulted in a new pop music that unites Christian Lahu with other highland converts but separates these Lahu from other Lahu that continue in their traditional animist practices. In the Lahu pop lyrics he quotes, there is a notion of uniting for a kingdom, but it is one of bilateral communion with Christians for a symbolic kingdom of God rather than any material or political ethnic or nationalistic manifestation.

[120] While not the focus of this chapter, signs in Ban Musoe today point to a better relationship between converts and traditionalists in Omkoi. Christian families still attend the New Year dance, and they do dance. They do not partake of any food offered to spirits, though. This complicates the observation of Hill *et al*, who observed that those who don't dance are those that have changed religion (2013: 9). In this village cluster, Christians still dance, at least at the New Year.

[121] Gender balance is a key trait of Lahu communities, with husbands and wives sharing equal duties and roles. This is mirrored by cosmology and religious practice, as seen in the male and female halves of the Lahu New Year (Walker 1983). The gender balance is also illustrated in Shanshan Du's *Chopsticks Only Work in Pairs* (2002; also Schworer-Kohl 1990).

[122] In Ban Musoe, community members interviewed used this term interchangeably with the Thai term *ajaan*, a borrowed Pali term (*ācariya*) translated as "teacher" but reserved for high-status positions (head monks, professors, etc…).

[123] Lahu mythology, for its part, demonstrates a long-standing awareness of the dangerous effects of opium and its addictive qualities. A mythical maiden, *Na Ma*, is said to have brought the seeds down from heaven, hiding them from *Guisha's* view in her vagina. When she died, the flowers sprouted from her grave, and any man that consumed them was then "married" to *Na Ma* (i.e., addicted). Opium was treated as a commodity to be used for trade or hiring labor (opium addicts would work in exchange for the drug). It was traditionally consumed only in medical emergencies as pain relief, or by the elderly. Addicts were tolerated but not looked upon favorably, and spirit doctors (*ne te sheh hpa*) typically were associated with its use, as average people would not typically be comfortable getting that close to the spirit world (see Walker 1992: 117-118, 136-143, 340-344).

[124] While working as a Peace Corps volunteer in the area from 2007-9, I was invited by the government office and some forestry officials to an isolated (no roads led into it) Lahu village for a confrontation. A bear had wandered into the village corn fields and was shot. Villagers claimed it was an act of self-defense and also claimed ignorance of the royal forestry law banning the hunting of this particular species. Tensions and suspicions remained high as poaching charges were considered. Villagers noted that the government workers only came around when charges and arrests were to follow, and relations between the organization and the village remained tense during my tenure. As this village had voted for the current mayor, leniency was expected by the village (even though the royal forestry department operated under a different ministry).

[125] Nishimoto unfortunately does not provide any citation for this song, merely referring to it and five others as "some Lahu popular songs." As such, I am unable to locate or transcribe its sonic features here.

[126] *Musoe* is what Thai people call the Lahu, and it comes reportedly from a Burmese word for "skilled hunter" or a Shan/Kham Mueang (northern Thai dialect) corruption of the same word (Solot 7).

[127] As per SAO website: http://www.monjong.go.th/index.php?_mod=ZGF0YWRldGFpbA&type=MQ (accessed 12/12/2015)

[128] *Doi Lang Mueang* (Mountain behind the *Mueang* [polity]) is what many of the nearby Karen and others call it today. I surmise that Jones' informants were saying as much, pronouncing *Lang* as *La* (the dropped final consonant is typical of highland groups less confident in Thai pronunciation. The Lahu language does not have final consonants). Now, the officially registered name is Ban Musoe (Lahu Village).

[129] The current SAO website (ibid) reports that the village was founded 40 years ago, which would post-date Jones' visit by nearly a decade. Thus, I am inclined to take Jones' date as the more accurate one (since he was there). The SAO website also mentions a "Lang Mueang village learning center" (ศูนย์การเรียนรู้หลังเมือง [*sun kanrienru lang mueang*]). Jones' map of the village, plus its description as a high elevation trading post between Omkoi and Mae Tuen, obviously marks Doi La Mueang of the 60s as the same village site as Ban Musoe of today. The website claims the first settlers of Ban Musoe came from Tak province, while Jones states that both the Lahu of Tak and the village of Doi La Muang came from the Doi Chang exodus in the 1950s. This was his reasoning for the similarities in custom between Tak and Omkoi settlements (1967: 143).

[130] As mentioned in chapter two, Andrew Johnson makes much of the celebrated status of Lanna as a modern cultural capital, comparable to Europe's good weather, ancient architecture, and impressive culture (2014: 100). The peak here, especially in the cold season where the fog shrouds the pine trees in mist, fulfills that imagined sense of European coolness.

[131] The gourd is noteworthy as it is linked to origin stories shared by nearly every ethnic group of the "Suwannaphum" area (see Sujit in Suwichan, 2011; also Proschan 2001; Jones 1971: 5). Jone's ethnography shows how the gourd myth in Lahu communities accounts for the treatment of rats in the home—they are not killed and are allowed to forage in human habitats since they were credited with chewing through the dried gourd skin and letting the people out into the world. Also, the gourd's repurposing as a mouthpiece in the *naw* family of instruments enables the player to speak directly to spirits and *guisha* (Jones 1967: 86-88, 96; Also see Bradley 1979:539). Proschan's reading of the gourd myth (2001) is one of multi-culturalism: the varied people groups are linked together as emerging from the gourd in a vision that is "inevitably pluralistic, stubbornly ethnoeccentric, and resolutely multilinear" (1027).

[132] Sabai Dee Club Studio's show, *Navigator,* featured attractions from the greater Maetuen-Monjong area in a 2011 episode (http://navigatortiktun.com/onair/detail.php?id=124). Also see Chumpon 2009.

[133] Here, too, there is some degree of dissatisfaction with government organizations. The roads are paved and maintained completely by community volunteer efforts, including temple donation drives to secure materials and labor for paving part of the road. The road even goes past a royal forestry outpost, so it would behoove the government to provide funds at least for that stretch of the road, but the community has had to raise their own money to get the project going. Locals complained that if they wait for the government to act, the road would take 10 years. At the same time, there is not too much urgency to finish the job, since Lahu trucks are the only ones that can reach the summit base. Thus, finishing the road might cut off a source of income.

[134] This is a substantial amount, as field laborers get paid on average 100 baht per day. One backpacking trip can thus earn a villager the equivalent of a month's worth of agricultural work.

[135] Hill *et al* (2013) use the term *awhui* for the abstracted entity (a combination of movement and sound), translating it as "music-dance" and noting that the two entities cannot be separated. Community members I spoke with more commonly used the broader term for overall activity glossed as "*ten jakhue*," a mashup of the Thai word for dance (*ten*) and the Lahu (*jakhue*) (see also Sunisa 2009).

[136] This notion of centers, satellites, and centripetality are a common feature of Southeast Asian power systems, as expressed in Tambiah's "galactic polity" (1977), Anderson's *Indic* structure (1972:28), and Tooker's village-level mandala (1996: 352).

[137] This can be heard in my field recordings of *Ajaan* Ja Le, who could not demonstrate the instruments and melodies without also tapping his toe on the dance step. Even though no one was dancing in these recording sessions, he had to account for the connection here to render the piece complete.

[138] Spelled *keh leh* in Hill *et al* (2013: 33).

[139] It can be inferred from these stomps (marked with an X) that female brush steps would fall between any steps that land on beats 1 & 3. There would be no brushes on the longer pauses (I do not notate them here because I am transcribing the performance of Ja Le only. As a male performer, he is responsible for only his steps and does not demonstrate those which are not his role).

[140] *Tue* tuning is 1 – 1 – 5, or DO-DO-SO. The neck is made from salvaged wood and features a curved head stock. There are no frets, but players grow out their fingernails and use them to stop the strings if a clean sound is desired; the fleshy part of the finger is used to damp the string when desired (here notated as staccato). The plectrum is

carved from animal horn into a shape resembling a bullet and is attached to the instrument with a string. The body of the instruments I saw were made from PVC pipe with either plastic or skin membranes stretched across. Beeswax filled any empty space in the holes drilled to pass the neck through the body.

[141] The *Kile* is a type of *Naw* (Free-reed gourd pipe aerophone) with five pipes, some of which can play multiple pitches based on finger placements (here, the standard set of pitches include a low E, a note between F# and G notated throughout as G, A, B, C#, and a higher octave E. In some cases, a low A "periodicity pitch" can be heard, even though none of the reeds are playing it. See appendix for examples).

[142] On this final day, Lisu representatives are also prone to make an appearance, hinting at possible broader understandings of highland solidarity—i.e., there are other 'inter-tribal' connections in addition to Kundstadter's "Christian Hilltribe" ethnic homogenization (1983).

[143] A marked contrast to the staged and consumable "outdoor" portions of *Khantoke* dinner shows in urban Chiang Mai, where "hill tribe" women and children perform for and with paying audiences (see Shahriari 2001: 87-88; Johnson 2014:103).

[144] As with the Karen scripts, the Lahu Romanized language was a product of missionization and is known and used primarily within Christian circles (Nishimoto 2015). Part of the necessity for broadcasting and reporting the event using Thai is also linked to the government office (SAO), which provides some support in the form of budgetary allocations for coffee, promotion, hot chocolate, and snacks as part of allowed government support of "local cultural preservation" (see Monjong SAO annual Budget 2016: 66). This year's proposed 15,000 baht had to be supplemented with local donations from locals with extra money, as some complained that the government was not doing enough to support them (this general theme extended to road maintenance, water systems, and tourist operations, all of which eventually fell to local villagers to start up themselves).

[145] Feld also points to this in *Sound and Sentiment* (1990), where the metaphoric "boy who became a *muni* bird" operated as the iconic embodiment of social obligation, sadness, and social participation in a conflation of sound, sentiment, and social expectation.

[146]Small's "Musicking" (1998) similarly deals with the disconnect of abstraction: "music" as a thing is experienced in action and context, not just as pure, objective sound or text. The ritual and social acts associated with it become the active locus of its meaning in our lives.

[147] James Scott's *The Art of not being Governed* (2009) famously outlined a long tradition of state-evasion tactics by highland communities in Southeast Asia, but they are preceded by the caveat that many of his claims might not apply post-WWII, since the state has since found means to lessen the distance provided by what was once unnavigable terrain (xii). In effect, the frontier is disappearing, along with the viability of agricultural practices that are tied closely to highland identity (see Tooker 2012, where 1985 marked the end of geographic isolation of her Akha village site). Walker suggests (2001: 151) that the bond between agricultural practice and ethnicity need not be so tight and might not even be a long-standing tradition but was perhaps rather a step or snapshot in time at the moment of anthropological contact with the west that has thus been cataloged as tradition (see also Jonsson in Tooker 2012: 47-50).

[148] This is an obvious reference to Scott's *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday forms of Peasant Resistance* (1985), here turned back on the marginalized populations in the form of assimilationist policies and state institutions.

[149] This meeting took place in 2008, but there have been many such meetings of Akha people. In one of these international meetings, Akha communities (many still without electricity) were linked up by live radio broadcasts from a Chiang Mai radio station and online feeds of the proceedings of a conference on Akha rights, education, land rights, and relationships to dominant lowlanders in all five nations. This meeting was the subject of Manu Luksch's documentary film *Virtual Borders* (2003), which followed Abaw Buseuv, a prominent Akha leader, and included a soundtrack by Aju himself. See http://www.ambienttv.net/akha/vb/index.html.

[150] Genealogy is crucial to Akha identity, traced patrilineally. As Goodman explains, a man's name consists of two syllables, the first being the second syllable of his father (i.e., *Aw Baw* begat *Baw So* begat *So Mi* and so on). This system allows lineage to be easily remembered and shared as Akha travel to villages far from their homes and can trace their ancestry back 40 generations or more until they reach commonality with their hosts in the form of shared Akha ancestor *Sm-io* (Goodman 53; also see Shinkaryov 1996 and Kammer 1989: 271). Aju continues this practice with his daughter's name, even though unnecessary, and incorporates English into the mix: A-Ju begat "Junior."

[151] http://www.doitung.org/about_origin_foundation.php

[152] Amidst all the typical discussions on deforestation/swiddening, it is also worth noting that Alting von Geusau saw a trend of *lowlanders* coming up the mountain to cut down the largest trees for profit while "employing" (coercing) the Akha to do their work. While it is true that Akha people did engage in swiddening, the more greedy

destructive, and entrepreneurial Thai loggers took advantage of government-built roads as well as government-instilled prejudices against highland peoples, making large profits from tree felling while Akha communities receive the blame (1999c).

[153] See the lyrics of "*Ja Deh* (The Akha Homeland)" for a musical/lyrical rendition of this forced migratory history in the appendix.

[154] Lack of citizenship in the 50s and 60s meant many highlanders were unprotected and unable to travel in Thailand for fear of being "deported". Pinkaew Laungaramsri notes that the "hill tribe" (*chao khao)* label is not just a geographic or agricultural label but a marker of non-Thai, whether in ethnic terms or in legal/citizenship terms (30).

[155] Li (2012) describes the conflicts between Neo-Traditionalist and Christian Akha. Where Paul Lewis taught his converts that ethnicity and religion could and should be separated (i.e., one can still be Akha and Christian), many traditionalists, Aju included, feel this compartmentalized approach is not realistic (see Tooker 2004). Paul Lewis himself alludes to religious practice *as* ethnic identity, as an Akha could move a village over and "do Chinese" (or Lisu or Lahu), thus ceasing to be Akha by observing the rituals of another group (Lewis 1982).

156 Here, possession is used in the traditional usage and implication, whereby growers earned usufruct rights to the plot for the agricultural cycle (a larger group collectively marks out and establishes the swidden, and plots are allotted). As Anan puts it, "shifting cultivation is not only a form of agriculture but also a form of local control and management of resources" (1998: 76).

[157] Again, many anthropologists studying the Akha point to the (pre-modern) nearly inseparable connections between agricultural ritual and animist belief (Li 2012; Lewis 1982; Cohen & Lyttleton 2008; Goodman 1996)

[158] Aju especially highlights the importance of the genealogist/reciter known as the *pima*, who, for funerals, sits off to the side of the circle playing a bamboo stamping tube (*baw tang*) while reciting lineages from the first Akha ancestor, *Sm-io*, to the current living generation (see Alting von Geusau in Turton 147), as well as charting other Akha knowledge quickly disappearing (Aju, public lecture). A main aspect of Aju's collaborative work with NGOs in partnership with Alting von Geusau has been the documentation of this disappearing ancestral knowledge (Alting von Geusau 2001; also see Li's "Neo-Traditionalism," 2012).

[159] Described as such by the filmmakers on the *Virtual Borders* project, which includes Aju and Alting von Geusau. http://www.ambienttv.net/akha/vb/us.html

[160] Alting von Geusau credits another important NGO, SEAMP (South East Asian Mountain Peoples' Programmes), for doing similar important work. Since 1971, SEAMP has recorded 1,000 tapes of archaic texts from ritual specialists, documented important ceremonies with over 60 films, and categorized medicinal plants and information (including 2,500 photos), all of which were housed and made accessible to the larger Hani/Akha network as an online archive. Research and further discussion took place in a briefly-funded journal, *Chivit Bondoi* (life on the mountain) (2001: 92).

[161] Aju's album lyrics are listed and translated in their entirety at Ambient TV's website, http://www.ambienttv.net/akha/aju/aqkaqzaqma/index.html. I use his translations for transcriptions in this chapter.

[162] Songs 8, *"Hgehq ar yehv* (Cherry blossom)," and 9, *"Saq laq ka-eu* (Plant Cotton)" [CD track 34], both from China, feature the distinctive rhythmic stamping pattern, but they are overlaid with synthesized strings and acoustic guitar, respectively.

[163] Aju says this "tying up the cat" is a reference to the ways Akha would go about establishing a new settlement when entering a new area. Paul Lewis describes the process whereby an outsider would lead (in his description) a *dog* around the area, and new houses would be built only in the path the dog had walked (Lewis 1996:2).

[164] Amporn proposes that *luk thung* may just be a local brand of a Pan-Asian genre more closely linked with Enka (2006).

[165] And, paradoxically or not, later more or less officially coopted by wealthy royalist elites of Bangkok (Mitchell 2011). Also worthy of mention here is James Mitchell's recent book (2015) on *Luk Thung* and its newly-emergent political applications in redshirt/yellowshirt political upheaval. The genre has in the past been overlooked as apolitical pop music of the countryside, but as political situations map onto rural-urban divides, the country itself, and its cultural products, can be fused to political attitudes of the region.

[166] I submit that this antiphonal response is part of a broader action in Thai communication and culture. Words are repeated to enhance the degree of significance, (i.e., *muean muean*, or "same same"; *lek lek*, or "small small"; *yao yao*, or "long long"; etc…), moments of slapstick comedy or impressive action shots in movies or soap operas are shown multiple times for emphasis, and punchlines from jokes in conversation are frequently repeated by Thai speakers. The Thai alphabet even has a special character in the alphabet used to mark this repetition, called *yamok*:

ๆ. The above three examples would be written as เหมือนๆ, เล็กๆ, and ยาวๆ, respectively. The word is not spelled out twice.

[167] "*Phu Yai Li*" has recently become a staple of "red-shirt" political gatherings in support of ousted Prime Minister and populist benefactor of Isaan and Lanna.

[168] Kammerer (1989: 289) mentions a Thai campaign in September of 1987 where authorities destoryed 13 highland villages (Akha and other "hill tribes") in the hills around Chiang Rai, citing the typical "problems" (deforestation, opium, communism) as their excuse. Villagers, many without ID cards, were put on Thai trucks and dropped off at the border of Burma with no food or shelter.

[169] This is in line with Csikszentmihalyi, too, as he surmises that "flow" is a psychological state available to (and desirable to) humans of any culture (1990: 49, 78, 151). For him, human happiness boils down to a mental process regardless of one's culture. The goal: optimal experience, enjoyment, intense concentration.

[170] To be clear, Csikszentmihalyi stresses that the self is paradoxically strengthened and expanded upon exiting the flow state. The self is not actually lost. He explains, "Loss of self-consciousness does not involve a loss of self…but rather, only a loss of consciousness of the self. What slips below the threshold of awareness is the concept of self, the information we use to represent to ourselves who we are" (64). His (and Turino's) emphasis on the *psychological* state of a participant stresses acceptance of the means of achieving flow regardless of *cultural* implication, though this is not to say that this can't be examined once participants return from their ecstatic state.

[171] Turino does observe a similar case in the Aymara communities of highland Peru, whose imagined musical legacy was seized upon in the *indigenismo* nationalist movements of the 20th century. Here, a hybrid blend of music facilitated downhill migration and an upward-looking ethnic imaginary: "Urban values and style become easier to assimilate when couched in a comfortable vehicle from home...Conversely, highland identity is legitimated by urban sophistication and style" (1988: 137). This same kind of "looking past" appropriations of highland/lowland is at work in the Akha case here. Lowland Thais may see the adoption of *luk thung* and *pleng phuea chiwit* as a sign of integration, while Akha above see it as appropriation and repurposing. Iconic sign communication is never a guaranteed means of fully transferring intent of producer to the interpreter (Turino 2008:13-14).

[172] https://www.ted.com/talks/mihaly_csikszentmihalyi_on_flow?language=en

[173] *Pi* is a larger family of Thai instruments, usually referring to double or quadruple reed aerophones. Within Lanna traditions, the *pi jum* features a brass free-reed attached to a bamboo pipe with finger holes. The player will put the mouthpiece, reed and all, into his mouth to play (inhaling and exhaling).

[174] His chapter on Nazi propaganda obviously does address the evil-yet-effective uses of music for propaganda (2008: 189-90), but only does so with the "conscious and explicit" political uses of music for these purposes (206). The subtle and unintended presence of ideology is not a theme he addresses.

[175] Ashley South (2007) describes the competing ethno-national narratives at work among Karen communities in Burma, arguing that the notion of a unified (i.e. homogenized) Karen people has been most championed by Christian elites, missionaries, and NGOs. Walker has a similar message regarding the somewhat deterministic "Karen Consensus" in Thailand (2001). Both point to the problems of demanding ethnic unity.

[176] For example, see "Thai Prime Minister Releases Morale-boosting Song" *The Guardian*, 22 December 2015 (https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/22/thai-prime-minister-prayuth-chan-ocha-song-because-you-are-thailand) or Charlie Campbell's "The Thai Junta's 'Happiness' Song is a Hit! (But Who'd Dare Say Otherwise?) *Time* 10 June 2014 (http://time.com/2851467/thai-coup-junta-happiness-song/).

Chapter 2, Appendix 1.

Word on the Street. As Principle Investigator, I conducted 3-5 minute interviews at random over a period of 2 months at various locations within Chiang Mai city. The basic question: "Of all the traditional songs of the north, which is the most important or the most famous?" The answers are detailed in the table and summarized below.

I interviewed 25 women and 23 men, ages 18-62 [breakdown: Teenagers (6), 20-29 (20), 30-39 (6), 40-49 (9), 50-62 (7)]. Professions of informants varied (including students, museum staff, lawyers, food vendors, janitors/groundskeepers, gardeners, security guards, IT programmers, monks, professors, musicians, and 7-11 employees). Informants reported home provinces as Chiang Mai (33), Lamphun (3), Bangkok (3), Chiang Rai (2), Isaan (2), Lampang (1), Mae Hong Sorn (1), Nan (1), Phayao (1), and the south (1). The majority of informants considered Jaran Manophet's *Long Mae Ping* to be most representative of traditional northern song (27 chose this song), followed by *Sao Chiang Mai* (4), *Gulab Wieng Phing* (3), *Mu Hao Jao Nuea* (2), *Noi Chaya* (2), *Sao Wieng Phing* (2), *Wai Jai Dai Ka* (2), *Sao Mawtoesai* (1), *Baokhuen* (1), *Jao Duang Dawk Mai* (1). When considering the amount of songs on the list that Jaran Manophet either wrote or performed, he represents 40 out of 48. The major lyrical themes reported vary, including: women and their beauty or manners (25), nature themes (mountains, rivers, waterfalls, flowers) (19), men's untrustworthiness with northern beauties (13), *Bangkok's* men's untrustworthiness specifically (10 times), references to local legend Bua Ban who threw herself off a waterfall to commit suicide (9), and local values or ways of life (7).

A curious issue occurred at the end of my survey as more university students entered the scene. While the vast majority of informants in their upper 20s through 60s recalled "traditional" songs, artists, and lyrics quite readily (overwhelmingly works by Jaran Manophet, with the exception of Bunsi Ratanang, who seemed to be favored by older men), college-age students instinctively pulled out their smart phones for confirmation. I tried to dissuade them, reinforcing that I was interested in *their* opinion of the most important or well-known northern songs. While the song (either the tune or the theme or other bits and pieces of it) were in their consciousness—many told me they heard the pieces in elementary school at official functions—most in the younger audience were incapable of recalling the artist or the title of the song. Over half of these informants under 22 turned to technology to confirm "tradition" (compared to three or four of the older participants that struggled to recall artist names or the lyrical themes). While this aspect of my study surprised me, the confirmation of Jaran Manopet's place in the northern canon did not. As Jane Fergusen points out so aptly:

> Although he hails from the Northern Thai Province of Lamphun, Jaran…became a popular musician in the pub scene in Chiang Mai starting in the 1970s. It was there as well that the general political movement of *thong thin niyom,* or "localism," began to gather strength, with Northern Thai academics taking increased interests in studying and

propagating the Lanna language. Making use of folk genres, styles, and instrumentation, Ai Jaran and his band composed dozens of songs in the Lanna language. With numerous recordings and continued live performances, he and his singing partner, Suntaree Waychanon, became household names in Thailand, the Northern provinces especially. Songs popularized by Jaran Manophet and Suntaree Waychanon include "*Sao motocy*" (Motorcycle girl), "*Pi sao khrap*" (Older Sister), "*Sao Chiang Mai*" (The girl from Chiang Mai), "*Uay Kham*" (Kham the elder), and "*Khong kin ban hao*" (Local cuisine). The songs of Jaran Manophet are predominantly in straightforward AABA format, with chorus and verse structure akin to the guitar folk styles of Pete Seeger and Joan Baez, and thematically the songs deal with signifiers of Northern Thai life, from different types of food to the Ping River…and with "universal" themes of romance and disappointment. Many of Ai Jaran's recordings feature simply his voice and acoustic guitar accompaniment. Later recordings feature larger ensembles as well as songs sung entirely in Central Thai. What is particularly salient about Ai Jaran's role in the proliferation of *folksawng kam mueang* is that he intentionally peppered they lyrics of many Northern Thai songs with Central Thai words so that the songs would be more easily comprehensible to those not fluent in the Northern Thai language. As many Thais will readily attest, it is because of *Ai* Jaran that "Northern Thai" (i.e. the language and other regional emblems became popular in Thailand. Again, although the likelihood is quite high that a Central Thai-speaking person from Bangkok would understand the lyrics to "*Pi sao Khrap*," this same person would be adrift at sea trying to understand the daily conversation of market vendors in Phayao or songs that draw more exclusively on the *kam mueang* language. The language of these examples of *folksawng kam mueang* can perhaps be thought of as Lanna "lite." In any case, *Ai* Jaran's success in the Thai national marketplace coincided with a time in which regional styles and distinctions became part of popular national tourist discourses and notions of local culture and authenticity (231-232).

#	From	Age	M/F	Occupation	Which traditional northern song is most famous?	What's it about?	What do you think of when you hear it?
1	Chiang Mai	22	F	Student/ museum intern	Jao Duang Dawk Mai (เจ้าดวงดอกไม้) by Patinya Tangtrakul (ปฏิญญา ตั้งตระกูล)	CM natural beauty	nature, land, Chiang Mai
2	Bangkok	20	F	Student	Wai Jai Dai Ka ไว้ใจได้กา by Lanna Commings	About whether or not the CM girl can trust the man from BKK	northern values & people
3	Chiang Mai	28	F	Museum Staff	Long Mae Ping "Definitely" [she was trying to correct the previous girl's response. Didn't like that her	Northern Women, beauty, nature	Reminds us of our language, our people, our artists

					representative song was the Lanna Commins song] ล่องแม่ปิง by Jaran Manophet. Also offered second song: Mu Hao Jao Nuea อมู่เฮาจาวเหนือ		
4	Bangkok	30	M	Musician	Noi Jaiya น้อยไจยา - famously sung as duet of Jaran Manophet and Suntari Wechanon สุนทรี เวชานนท์ (who is the mother of Lanna Commins)	About old culture, lanna language, lanna style true love	True love, Chiang Mai style melody (pentatonic)
5	Chiang Mai	29	M	Musician	Long Mae Ping by Jaran Manophech	Chiang Mai, the river, this place	The beauty of our women, goodness of our character
6	Chiang Mai	28	M	Musician	Long Mae Ping	About a man from BKK that cheats a local woman, gets her pregnant, lies to her	Local girls should not trust guys from BKK
7	Chiang Mai	33	F	Museum Staff	Long Mae Ping	About local culture, life, women, nature, true love, broken hearts	Can't trust a man from BKK with our women
8	Chiang Mai	27	M	Student	Long Mae Ping	Bangkok used to look down on us	BKK men don't have the same values as Chiang Mai people
9	Isaan	24	F	Museum Staff	Long Mae Ping	Women cheated by BKK man	Nature, life, the north
10	Chiang Mai	23	F	Museum Staff	Sao Motorcycle สาวมอเตอร์ไซค์ by Jaran Manopetch	Flirting	traditions of the north
11	Chiang Mai	30	F	Museum Staff	Sao Chiang Mai สาวเจียงใหม่ by Jaran & Suntari	women from CM, hurt by a man, decides to marry a boy from the mountains who is more honest	Think of nature, life, the north
12	Chiang Mai	25	F	Museum Staff	Long Mae Ping	Nature, broken hearts	Our language, our nature, our people
13	Chiang Rai	27	F	Museum Staff	Long Mae Ping	Ping River	Life in the north
14	Lamphun	33	M	Monk	Long Mae Ping	Nature, Ping river, two legendary women	We should take care of our nature in the north. Also, reminds me of the legend of *Ma*

							Mia
15	Chiang Mai	42	M	Government Worker	Long Mae Ping	Women of Chiang Mai	Think of nature, I hear it and I miss home
16	Chiang Mai	40	F	Ice Cream Vendor	Long Mae Ping	Nature	Broken hearted women (Bua Ban)
17	Chiang Mai	36	F	Coffee Vendor	Long Mae Ping	Compares CM women to orchids, way of life, love and BKK cheaters	Feel good when you listen, think of your childhood.
18	Nan	47	F	Security Guard	Long Mae Ping	About the suicide at Huay Kaew Waterfall. CM woman cheated by BKK man	Think of Chiang Mai, rural life
19	Chiang Mai	57	F	Janitor	Mu Hao Jao Nuea หมู่เฮาจาวเหนือ by Sanid Siriwisud	Our people in the north, our language, our traditions (especially Songkran)	I think of making merit at the temple
20	Chiang Mai	35	F	Coffee Vendor	Long Mae Ping or Ma Mia มะเมียะ	I don't really know,	but when I hear it, I know it is northern. It's very common
21	Chiang Mai	55	M	IT network	Songs by Bunsi Ratanang บุญศรี รัตนัง	Songs are fun, exclusive (BKK people don't understand his accent)	Hilarious
22	Chiang Mai	40	F	Bookstore manager	Songs by Bunsi Ratanang บุญศรี รัตนัง	he's more upbeat than Jaran Manopetch (he's "Like Michael Jackson or John Denver: Everyone knows him" but I don't really like his music)	Bunsi is better
23	Chiang Mai	45	M	Gardener	Sao Chiang Mai	CM Women. A man comes to flirt, but she doesn't give in so easily	This song is about our identity. I think of Chiang Mai when I hear it
24	Chiang Mai	56	F	Gardener	Long Mae Ping	About the mountains; Fun ("*muan*")	Makes me happy, makes work more fun. We listen to it on our phones all day.
25	Bangkok	26	F	Coffee Vendor	Wai Jai Dai Ka	Comparing BKK/CM men. Warns them not to trust BKK men	I disagree with it (I'm from BKK, and so is my boyfriend, and I trust him)

26	Isaan	44	F	Coffee Vendor	Long Mae Ping, Sao Chiang Mai, Ma Mia	Local women and their troubles with men from out of town	I know it's northern by the melody (Isaan songs are fun/upbeat. These are sad and slow)
27	Chiang Mai	42	F	Professor	Sao Chiang Mai	Local woman seeks true love; suitors are suitable.	Chiang Mai culture, polite behavior called *Rumnuan*. Women are gentle, quiet, graceful. The melody reflects this idea.
28	Chiang Mai	55	M	Durian Vendor	Baokhuen ป่าวเคิ้น by Bunsi Ratanang	Unmarried men, no wife yet	very fun! Northern language throughout. Bunsi is older than Jaran Manopetch, more upbeat
29	Chiang Mai	58	M	Furniture Maker	Mu Hao Jao Nuea	northern people, language, characteristics	Fun, holidays (Songkhran)
30	Mae Hong Sorn	23	F	7-11 checker	Sao Wieng Ping กาสะลองสาวน้อยเวียงพิงค์	northern girl, beautiful, love, missing home/the north/mom	traditions, people, language, beauty of the north
31	Payao	53	M	Groundskeeper	Long Mae Ping	Chiang Mai, beauty, people of the north	Traditions, our past, fun
32	Chiang Mai	19	F	Student	Gulab Wieng Phing กุหลาบเวียงพิงค์	northern beauty compared to a rose	Childhood
33	Chiang Mai	18	F	Student	Gulab Wieng Phing กุหลาบเวียงพิงค์	Roses and beauty	Childhood
34	Chiang Rai	21	F	Student	Gulab Wieng Phing กุหลาบเวียงพิงค์ by Wongjan Phairot	Roses and beauty	Childhood (we heard this song growing up)
35	Chiang Mai	20	M	Student	Long Mae Ping	Nature	School
36	Chiang Mai	21	M	Student	Long Mae Ping	Women, can't trust men	Life in the north
37	Chiang Mai	19	M	Student	Sao Chiang Mai	Beauty	Growing up in the north
38	Chiang Mai	21	M	Student	Long Mae Ping	Mountains	Traditions
39	Chiang Mai	21	M	Student	Long Mae Ping	Waterfall, suicide, cheating lovers from BKK	I heard this song at cultural activities growing up. All the time.

40	Chiang Mai	44	F	Professor	Long Mae Ping, but Sao Motorcycle and Luk Khao Nueng ลูกข้าวนึ่ง (sticky rice child)	way of life, northern language	people/way of life in the north
41	Lamphun	25	M	Law student	Long Mae Ping	Women and nature	700 years of history, culture
42	Chiang Mai	25	M	Lawyer	Long Mae Ping	Good manners/ behavior	"The Melody is Lanna"--easy going, soft (*nim*), gentle, like us
43	Lamphun	19	M	Student	Long Mae Ping	Don't know [consulted smart phone]	Relaxed
44	Lampang	18	M	Student	Sao Wieng Ping	Women	I don't listen to it, but I know it from school
45	Chiang Mai	19	M	Student	Long Mae Ping	Don't know [googled it]	I used to hear it on the radio all the time [i.e., Yano's "music overheard"]
46	Southern Region	21	F	Student	Don't know northern songs, but for the south, we have Pak Tai Ban Rao ปักษ์ใต้บ้านเรา	About the mountains, sea, river, the south	I miss home
47	Chiang Mai	43	M	Museum Staff	Noi Jaya by Sunthornpajonkit สุนทรพจนกิจ and Princess Dara, Phi Sao Khrap (by Jaran Manophetch)	About Chiang Mai, melody taken from vocal Saw music, written by Dara Rasmi, 100 year old	Weather, *Being Northern* (Khuampen Khon mueang), local life
48	Chiang Mai	62	M	Retired Principal	Long Mae Ping	About Dararasmi and her fusion of northern and central music	Fun, the north

Notes on Songs mentioned.

1. *Jao Duang Dawk Mai* is one of many songs that feature men from "the south" [of Chiang Mai] flirting with northern beauties. [i]
2. Lanna Commins is a "*luk khrueng*" artist (half-Thai, half-white) and also the daughter of well-known *Folk Sawng Kam Mueang* singer Suntaree Wechanon, who sang many duets with Jaran Manophet. This song was featured on a Thai soap opera in 2003, among other places, so it has modern/urban cache. The song, *Wai Jai Dai Ka* features a (northern) female narrator wondering if she can trust the man.
3. This informant tried to interrupt the previous girl, attempting to "fix" her "incorrect" answer: Lanna Commins/*Wai Jai Dai Ka* was no Jaran Manophet/*Long Mae Ping* in her eyes. This was more than a generational issue, it was a local identity issue.
4. Khamla Thanyaporn (famous contemporary Lanna musician) introduced *Noi Chaya* as the love story between Dararasmi and Chulalongkorn (Rama V) at the Chedi Luang festival in 2013. According to the Dara Museum, Princess Dararasmi collaborated with Lanna Poet Thao

[i] Yang Khit. "Choen Ma Chuen Ma Chon." *OKnation* (May 21, 2015). Accessed 8/27/15 http://www.oknation.net/mblog/entry.php?id=957098

Sunthorn Pajonkit who wrote the play "Noi Chaya." Dara provided "melodies in the Traditional Chiang Mai style" to accompany the play.
5. Eavesdropping local musicians that felt B's choice of *Noi Chaya* was not quite the MOST famous/important song and suggested Jaran Manophet's *Long Mae Ping* was the clear winner.
8. To try and explain the situation to me, this informant compared the situation of Bangkok/Chiang Mai with the US and its history with Black slaves: taken advantage of, looked down upon, not seen as full citizens. Chiang Mai (*Khon Mueang*) were second-class citizens.
10. Manager Magazine claimed *Sao Motorcycle* and *Phi Sao Krap* appeal widely to youth because the lyrics are so relevant (A mashup of his songs was featured on Thailand's *The Voice* in 2014).[ii] The story: a young, poor man drives his cheap motorcycle (cranked by foot to start it) to the girl's house. Her mother closes the door. He and his Honda or Yamaha have no luck. Jaran wrote/rewrote it from an older song, making it his own and, in his words, "More traditional" in that sense.[iii]
11. In *Sao Chiang Mai* [sometimes transcribed as *Sao Jieng Mai* to emphasize northern dialect], the woman rejects suitors from Lamphun, Chiang Rai, and other places, and decides to marry a Hmong man (Thai lyrics use a not-so-PC term, *Maew* แม้ว) on Doi Pui, where she sells trinkets to make a living.
14. *Ma Mia* is another famous story of love in the north: CM women in love with a prince from Burma. They love each other but he has to return to his princely duties and marry a princess. She is left heartbroken (as is the prince).
18. Informant could not think of the name *Long Mae Ping*, but she knew it was the song about Bua Ban and Huay Kaew waterfall on Doi Suthep.
19. *Mu Hao Jao Nuea* is described in Khru Aed's *salaw saw sueng* instructional book: Written in 1952, first recorded in 1960. Written for the Northerners Association of Thailand (BKK institution). Adopted as the official song of this institution, it was broadcast far and wide throughout the north. Sometimes referred to as "the march of the north"[iv].
20. Informant could not think of a well-known northern song on the spot, so she turned to her smart phone to help her out.
21. Bunsi Ratanang, (1953—), Lanna folksinger, well-known in the north, declared a Chiang Mai Cultural treasure in 1990. Informants speak of him as a more fun, more "truly" traditional northern musician (i.e., not as cosmopolitan as Jaran Manophet. Interestingly enough, these are some of the same comparisons my Karen informants made between Chi Suwichan and Tue Pho—see next chapter).
28. A sense of this northern concept of *Muan* (central Thai: "*sanuk*"), meaning "fun," is captured in a youtube video of Bunsi's song *baokhuen* (plus two other numbers) which features a northern village nighttime party showcasing relatively scantily-clad go-go dancers, comical little people as oddities, homemade rice whiskey, and upbeat accented off beat with vocal trills. The lyrics praise drinking, love, fun, etc… It is a

[ii] Jennifer Kim and Tata Young FC. สาวมอเตอร์ไซค์ - หนุ่ม และโค้ชเจนนิเฟอร์ คิ้ม-โชว์ทีมเจนนิเฟอร์ คิ้ม [Sao Mawtoesai – Num Lae Coach Jennifer Kim—Show team Jennifer Kim] The Voice Thailand. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lohmG1BxhAQ&index=1&list=RDlohmG1BxhAQ . Accessed 8/27/15.
[iii] Khita Phayathai. "Jaran Manophet: Sao Mawtoesai" *Manager* (December 10, 2009) http://www.manager.co.th/Entertainment/ViewNews.aspx?NewsID=9520000150829
[iv] Ajaan Phanuthat Aphichanathong (Khru Aed). *Nangsuea Note Phleng Samrap Dontri Phueanmueang Lanna: Salaw Saw Sueng* [Musicbook of Traditional Lanna Music: Salaw Saw Sueng]. No publisher, no date. Page 28.

typical karaoke village party scene.[v]

32. Group interview of three female students at Payap. Every time I asked a question about traditions, they'd pull out their smart phones to find the answer (local song? Lyrics? Important traditions?). The song itself, *Gulab Wieng Phing*, declares there is no beauty equal to this rose, and local women should be careful to not be quick to believe the words of incoming men, who are not to be trusted. In the end, it brings up the ever-present case of poor Bua Ban, the girl tricked by the Bangkok lover, who threw herself off of Huay Kaew Waterfall in a fit of shame and sadness.

35. Another group interview with male students, who also consulted their phones. The song *was* in their consciousness, but not solidly so. For them, Google provided confirmation of their selection.

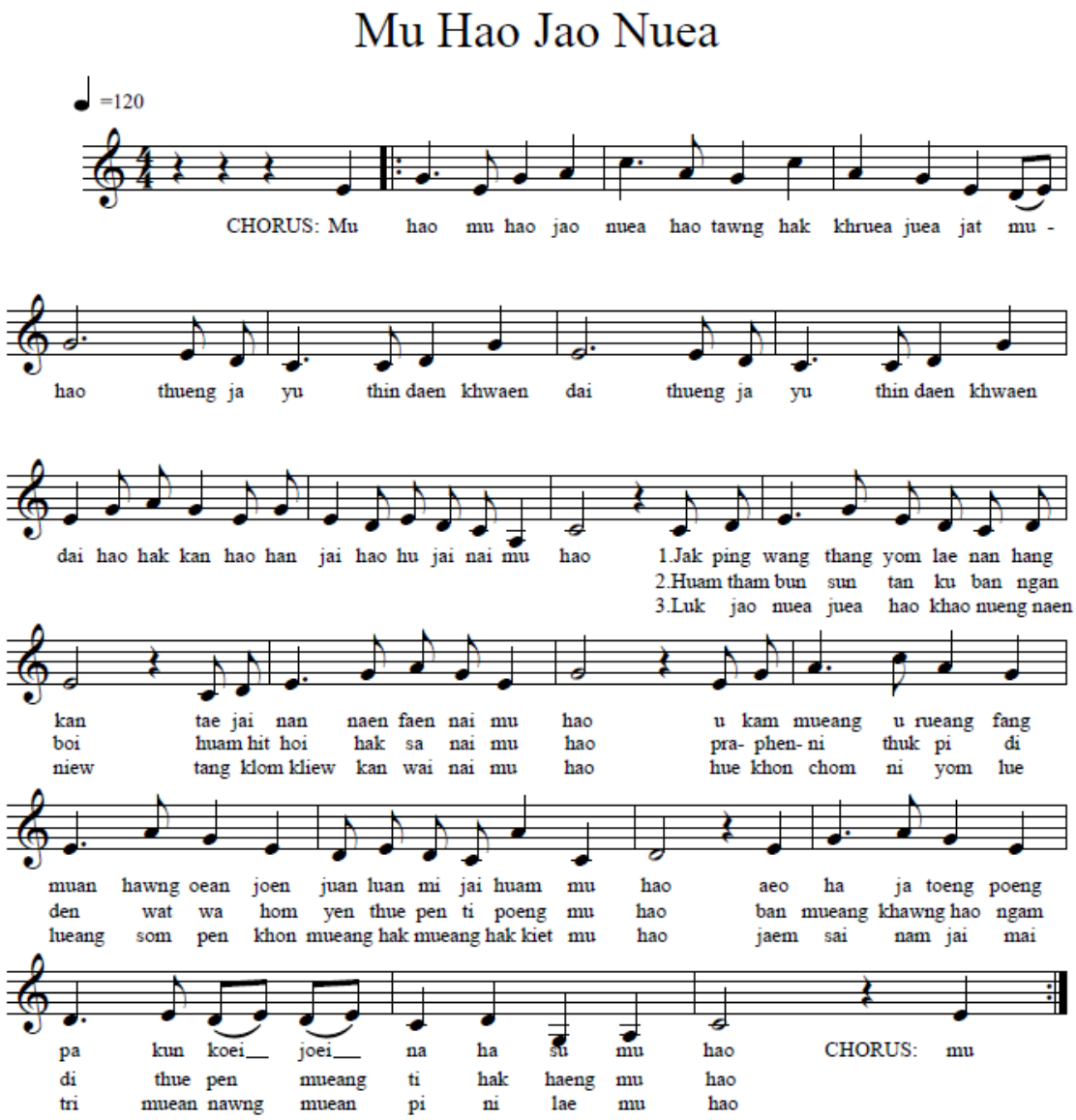
40. This professor echoes some of Ferguson's ideas of "Lanna Lite" (Ferguson 232), saying that *Long Mae Ping* is very accessible to central Thai speakers while "more northern" songs such as *Luk Khao Nueng* are closer to the actual *kham mueang* dialect. Thus, localism walks a fine balance between internally-consumed (and marking the distinction between the we-self and other) and projected outward (and necessarily watered down for a central palate).

43. Another group of younger students. All were northern girls, but they did not know the lyrics of the songs they thought to be traditional. Each of them turned to their smart phones to confirm the name, artist, and/or lyrical content, and all remembered hearing the song at school functions as kids. They all claimed to appreciate Jaran Manophet's music, but, given the choice, they admitted they would not pick any of these songs to play on their personal devices.

[v] ป่าวเคิ้น+จุ๊อ้ายขายควาย+ปี่หนานซ้ำ [*Baokhoem + Ju Ai Khai Khwai + Pi Na Cham*] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ai9c2gKDHyY. Accessed 8/26/15.

Chapter 2, Appendix 2a. Basic transcription of "*Long Mae Ping*" (heterophony and embellishment is expected when performing)

Chapter 2, Appendix 2b. A "translation" of "*Mu Hao Jao Nuea*" as written in northern Thai solfege to Western staff notation.

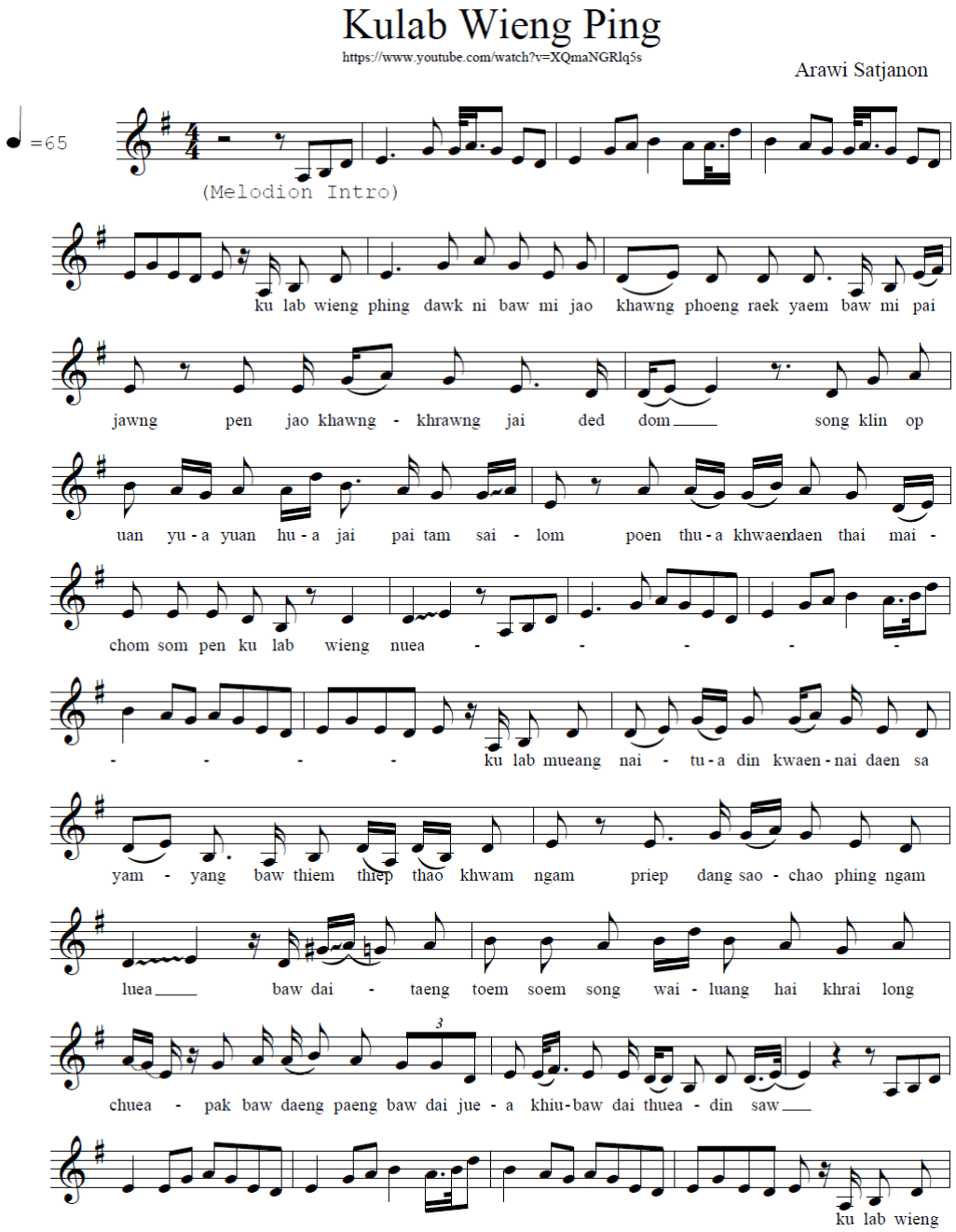


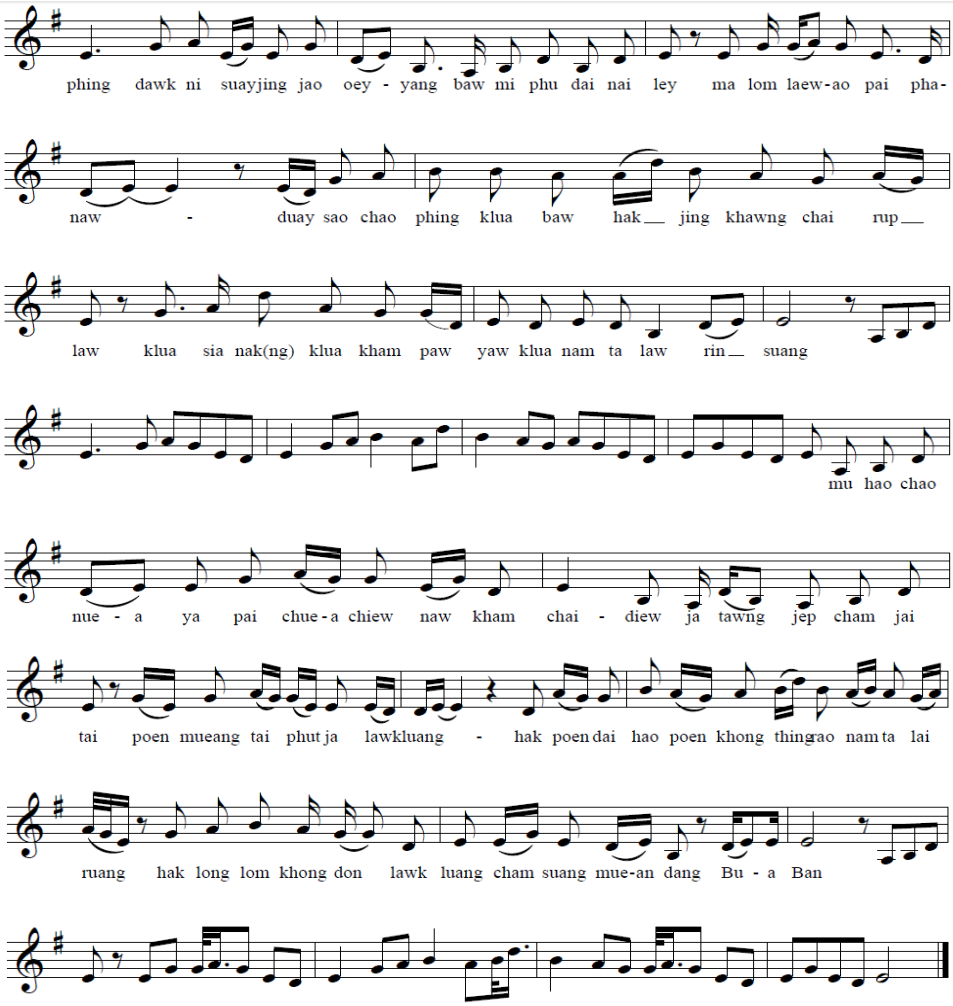
The verses generally cover different aspects of northern people and places:

1. North-south rivers and valleys serve as geographic walls but *not* as divisions of the heart, since all speak the same, fun language.
2. Cool, shady temples and annual festival traditions unite us as a single people with love for each other and our homeland.
3. We northerners are respectful, we eat sticky rice, and we treat each other as kin.

The chorus continues the main message: We northerners love our lineage. No matter how far away we live from one another, we all know and love each other here.

Chapter 2, Appendix 2c. Transcription of "*Kulab Wieng Phing*." While not the focus of this dissertation, this *luk thung* song provides an excellent example of matching Thai tones to melody. Words with a rising tone (*khawng* [belonging to], *khwaen* [area], *nai* [which], *nuea* [north]) are performed with an exaggerated slurred rise of pitch. High tones (*ni* [this], *hak* [love]) and low tones (*kulab* [rose], *jep* [hurt]) are placed relatively higher and lower than their mid tone neighbors (*khrai* [who], *mi* [to have]) in general. Falling tones are similarly treated with a falling pitch (*thiep thao* [to be equal to]). This is generally consistent throughout the song.





General meaning (the original Thai is of course more poetic):

The rose of Chiang Mai is owned by none. When it first bloomed, none desired it. None wanted to own, pick, or smell it. It is praised all throughout Thailand, this rose of the north.

Any other rose from any other land, all throughout Siam, cannot match the beauty of the northern woman. They are beautiful unadorned, with unpainted lips, unpowdered faces, and unpenciled eyebrows.[vi]

This rose is truly beautiful, and untouched. Ping women are wary of the handsome playboy and his untrue love. They fear they'll be spoiled, they fear his flattery. They worry their tears will run down to their chest.

We northerners, we must not go believing these men's words. Our hearts and minds would be hurt. Our southern neighbors deceive us with words. If they get us, they would leave us only with our tears. If misguided, we'll be deceived. We'll be heartbroken, as was Buaban.

[vi] During Phibun's "cultural revolution" (1938-42), the spelling of "Thailand" was discussed as it related to female beauty and regionalism. With the added "h", *Thai* implied "a sophisticated girl with her hair set, her lips touched with lipstick, and her brow arched with eyebrow pencil while Tai without the 'H' is like a girl who is naturally attractive but without any added beautification" (Thamsook 235).

Chapter 2, Appendix 3. Pictures from Suan Dawk community group.

"Preserving arts and culture: traditional music." This sign loosely hangs on a board at the dusty southeast exit of Wat Suan Dawk and marks the meeting point for the community group to gather and play *salaw-saw-sueng* music with Khru Tom on weekends. Pictured on the sign from left to right are the *sueng, klawng, pi*[vii], *saw sam sai, ching, khlui, and salaw.*

Khru Tom leads a group of 40 students at Ban Nawnghan Elementary School by alternating between playing *khlui* and singing the melody of *Long Mae Ping* into a microphone. Solfege notation has been taped onto the board [CD track 03].

[vii] This *pi*, a quadruple reed instrument, features a loose-fitting metal bell more typical of Burmese models. As Chiang Mai was under Burmese rule for 200 years, many traits are retained.

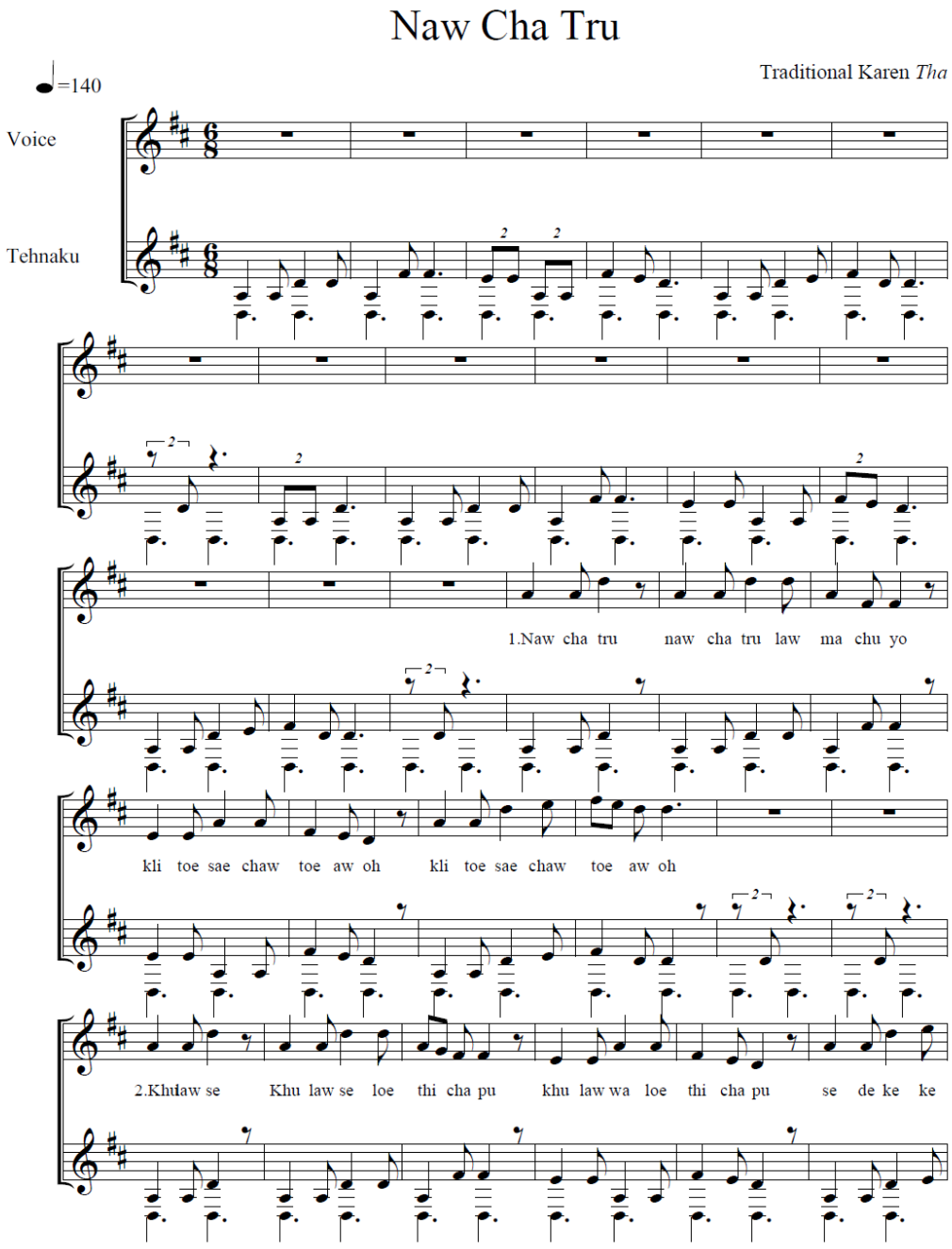
Lanna Folk Life Museum display showing musical intimacy with the *phin pia*. The shirtless, shoeless, and chairless scene would be banned as "uncivilized" under a central Thai cultural revolution of the 1940s, where Prime Minister Phibun paid particularly close attention to national dress (Thamsook 1978:238-9).

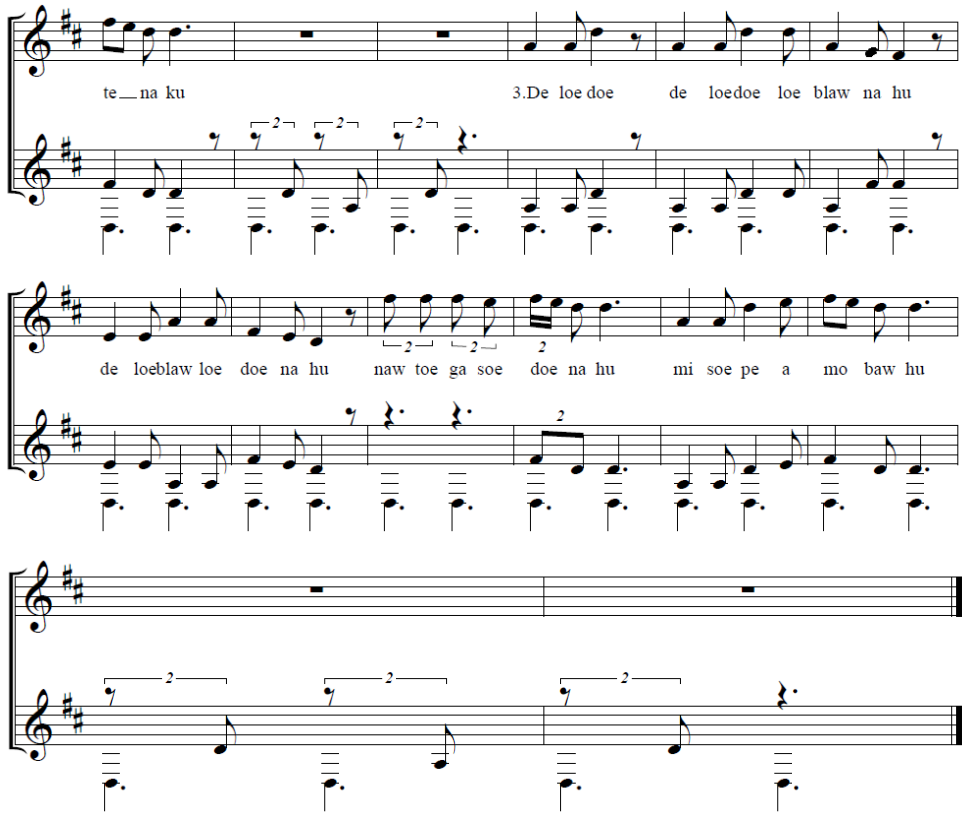
Final rehearsals at Suan Dawk before the *Sao Inthakin* festival. Solfege notation faces the beginners while Khru Tom and other expert performers play from memory.

Prepping the stage for *Sao Inthakin*. The half-toppled stupa of *Chedi Luang* dominates the skyline behind.

The author being "covered" at the annual *wai khru* ceremony for Khru Aed (Khru Tom is to the right and is one of many of Khru Aed's disciples). Khru Aed is well-known and highly respected for bringing traditional Lanna music back to schools, festivals, and the public sphere in general after decades of neglect (see Akins and Bussakorn, 2011).

Chapter 3, Appendix 1. Transcription of *"Naw Cha Tru."* This song is referenced in *Forbidden Songs* as well as in many of Chi's public lectures as a message to the young Karen, the new generation, who leave their villages in search of education and modernity. The message is clear: they've gone so far away that they can no longer hear (the wisdom of) their elders. It is a call for cultural revival and pride amidst the continuing onslaught of modern gadgetry, religious dogma, and government-encouraged assimilation programs and policies.





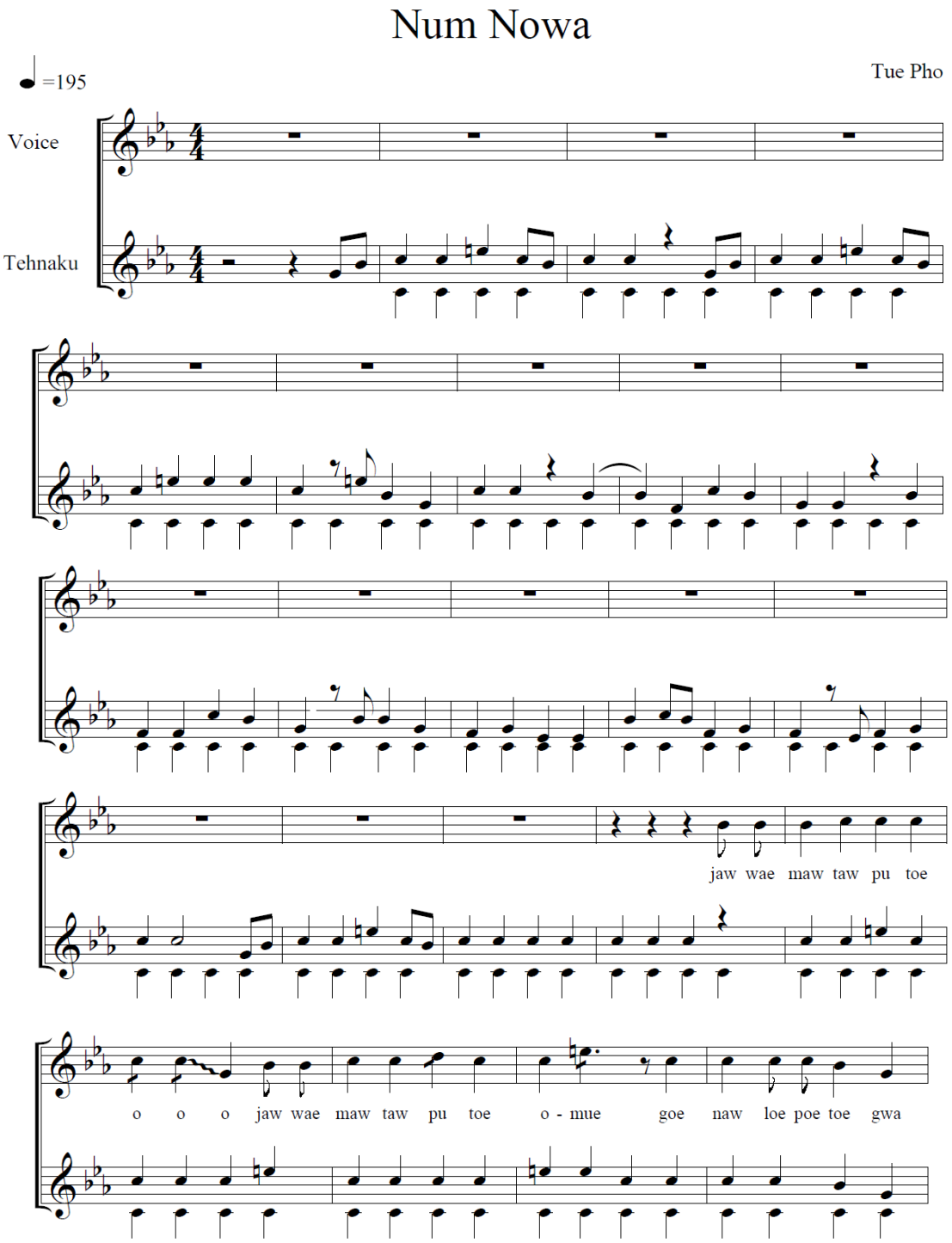
Translation:

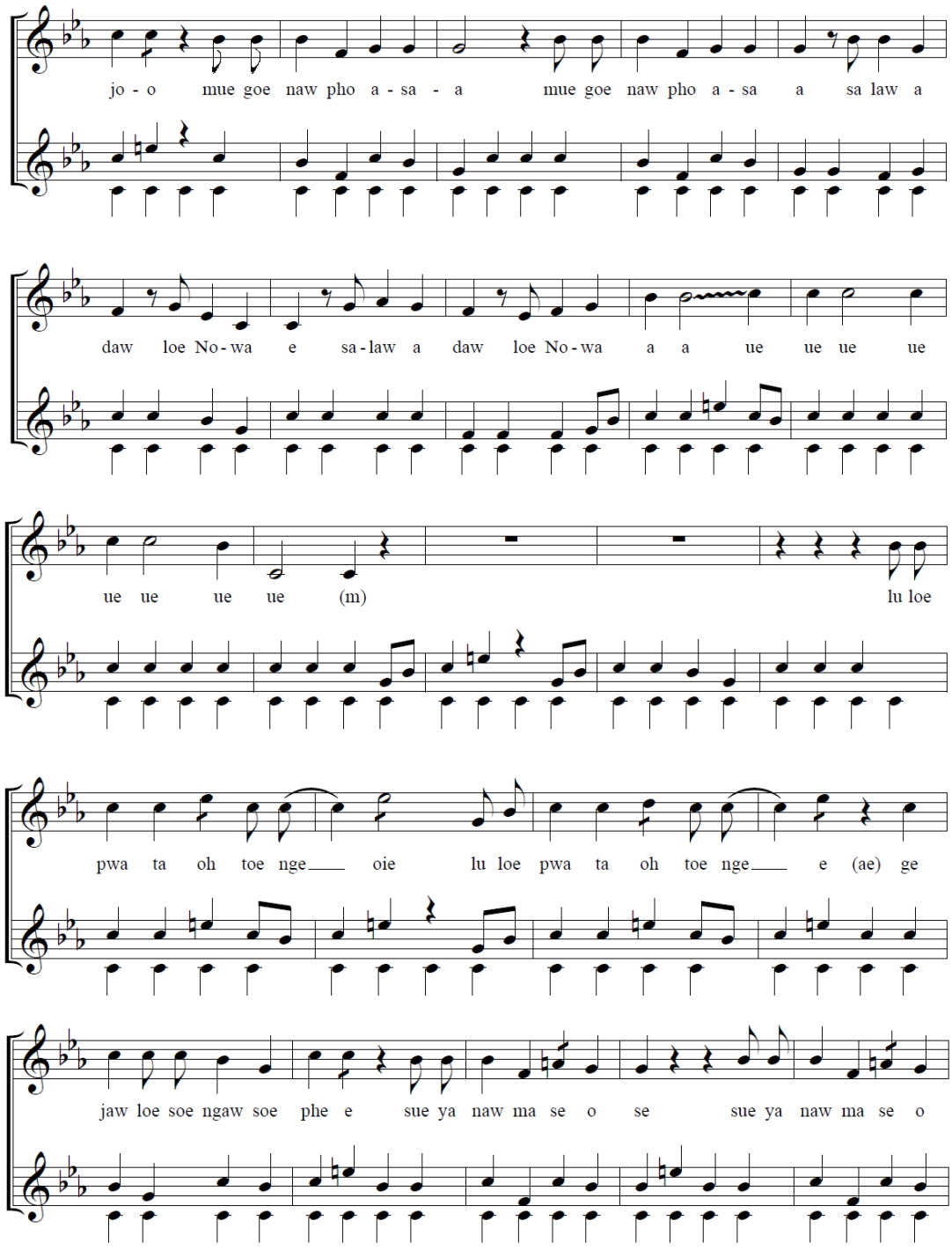
Miss *Chà Tru*, Miss *Chà Tru*,
Has left our village for the city;
The rice pounding mortar has gone silent,
The rooster does not crow.

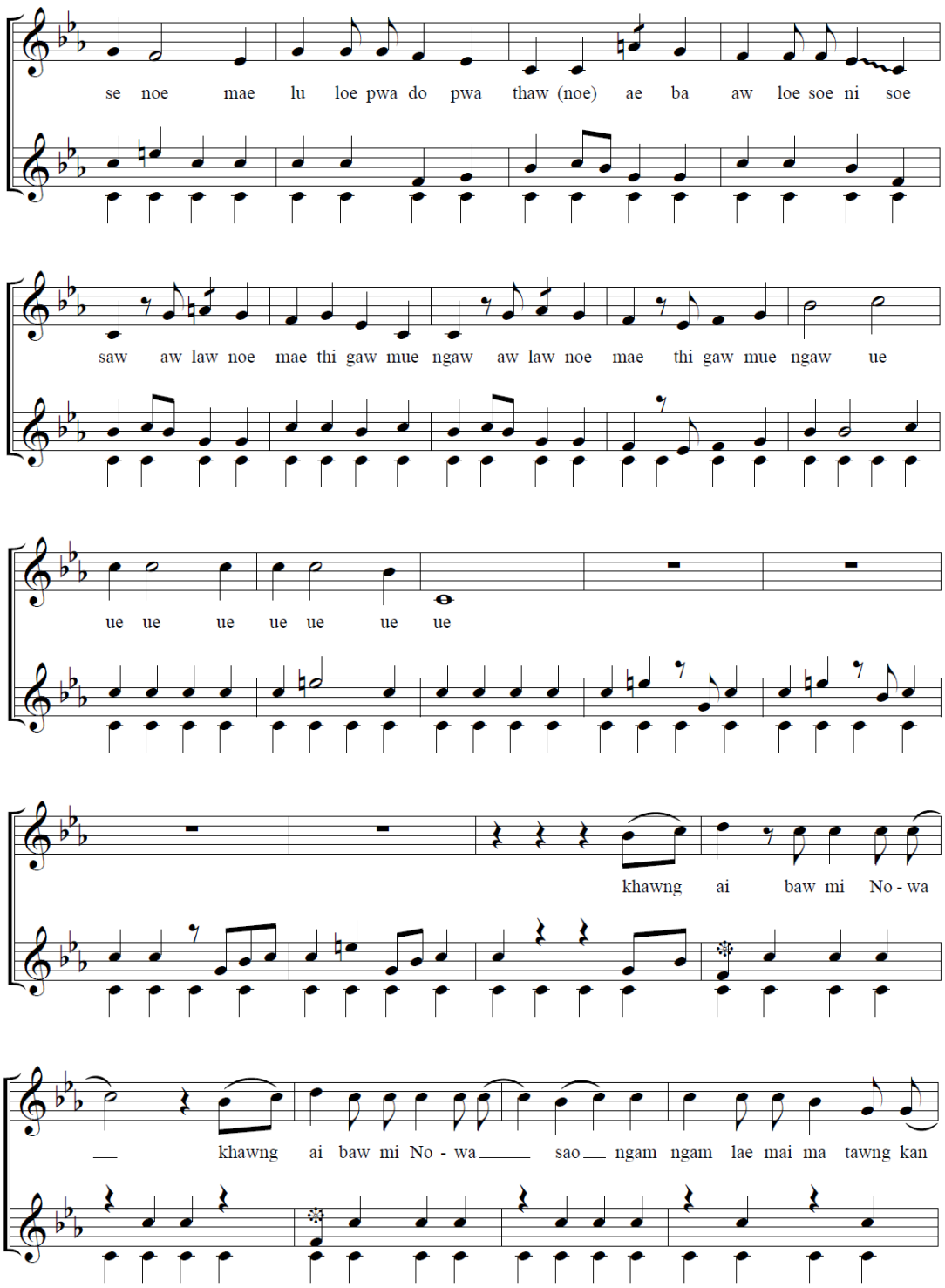
Tend to the gardens amidst the forest,
Tend to the rice fields at the headwaters;
If you see curved bamboo, make a tehnaku,
If you see curved wood, make a tehnaku.

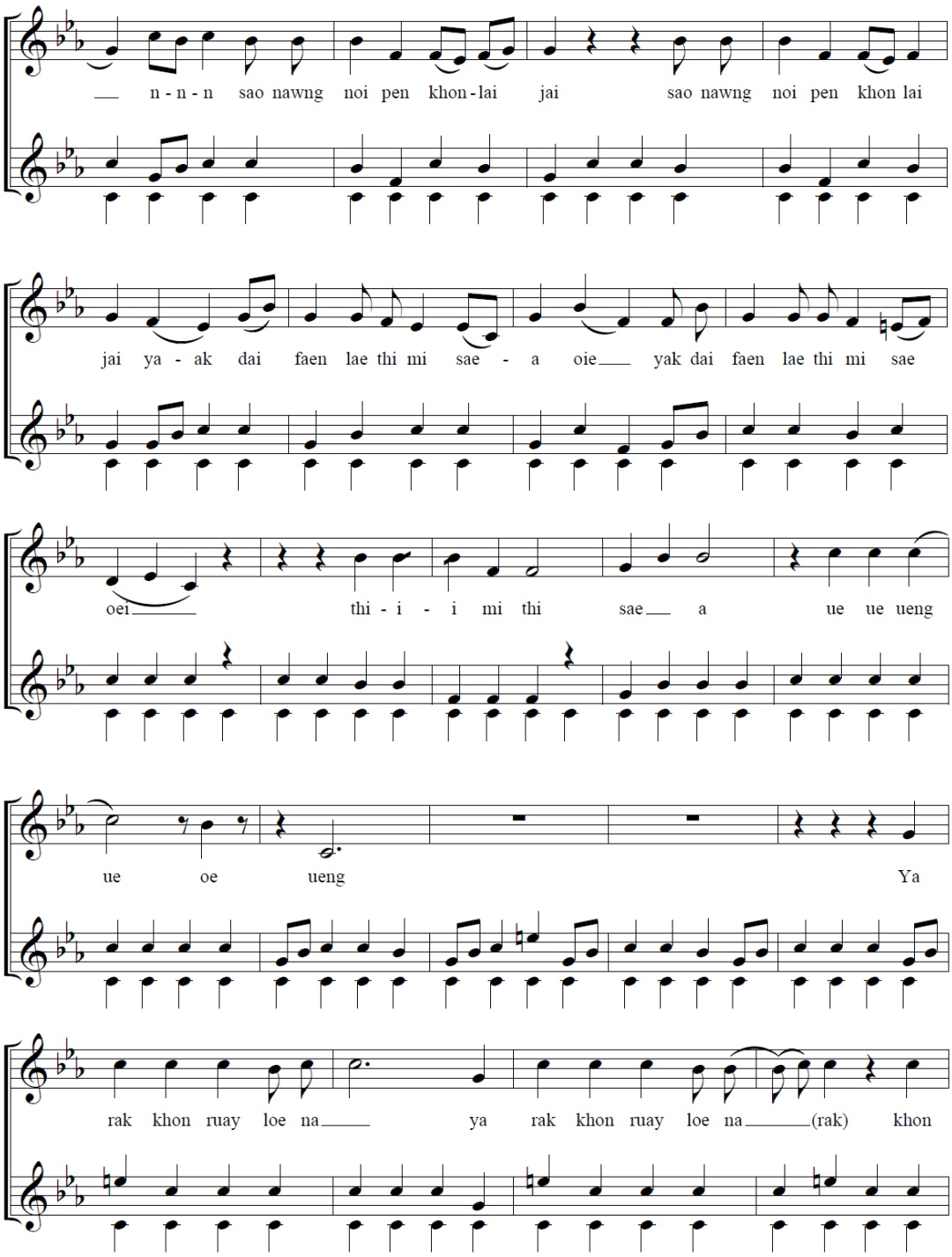
Play it at home, it is heard in the fields,
Play it in the fields, it is heard in the village;
Miss *Chà Tru* says she does not hear it,
She is asleep; wake her up already!

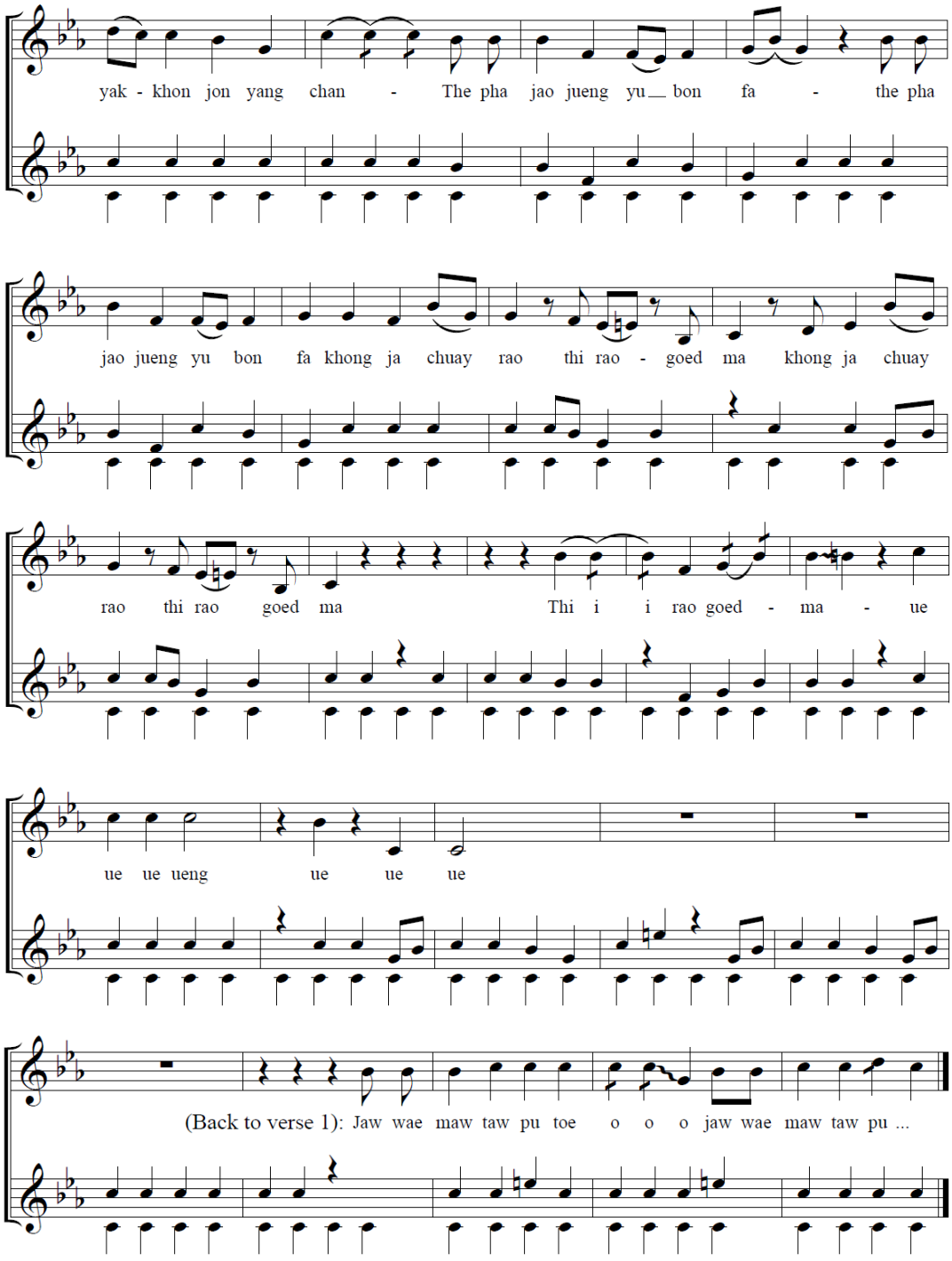
Chapter 3, Appendix 2. Transcription of Tue Pho's "*Num Nowa"* [Motorcycle Youth]. While Chair and many other Karen identify Tue Pho's music as "traditional" Karen, Chi saw this style as similar to Isaan electrified *luk thung* (heavy dance beat, long modal solos over a drone). Tue Pho's lyrics also fall more closely in line with *luk thung* or *phleng phua chiwit*, dealing with poverty, love, oppression, and material things. Here, the famed *Nova* motorcycle is featured.




jo - o mue goe naw pho a - sa - a mue goe naw pho a - sa a sa law a
daw loe No - wa e sa - law a daw loe No - wa a a ue ue ue ue
ue ue ue ue (m) lu loe
pwa ta oh toe nge oie lu loe pwa ta oh toe nge e (ae) ge
jaw loe soe ngaw soe phe e sue ya naw ma se o se sue ya naw ma se o


se noe mae lu loe pwa do pwa thaw (noe) ae ba aw loe soe ni soe
saw aw law noe mae thi gaw mue ngaw aw law noe mae thi gaw mue ngaw ue
ue ue ue ue ue ue ue
khawng ai baw mi No - wa
khawng ai baw mi No - wa sao ngam ngam lae mai ma tawng kan


n - n - n sao nawng noi pen khon - lai jai sao nawng noi pen khon lai
jai ya - ak dai faen lae thi mi sae - a oie yak dai faen lae thi mi sae
oei thi - i - i mi thi sae a ue ue ueng
ue oe ueng Ya
rak khon ruay loe na ya rak khon ruay loe na (rak) khon



(Note: the lyrics repeat at this point and the remainder of the song is not transcribed)
This song vacillates between northern Thai and Sgaw Karen, depicting the poor youth who is so impoverished that he can't even afford the *Nova* (the most mocked of village motorcycles). As a result, no woman could ever love him. His response: don't love a rich man. Love a poor man like me and let the gods up above take care of us with whatever comes our way. Tue Pho's youtube video depicts the village scene visually, too (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=32RK9D3vlBU)

Chapter 3, Appendix 3. Pictures

Chi Suwichan Phattanaphraiwan presenting at the opening of the East West Center's *Songs of Memory* exhibit (May, 2012). Surrounding him are various Karen musical instruments collected by Victoria Vorreiter. Most prominently featured here are the bronze frog drum (*klo*), the tehnaku, and the free-reed buffalo horn (*khwae*). All three of these instruments play an important role in calling the community to gather.

Chair tunes his tehnaku at his *Ban Tong Luang* eco-museum station. Girls from neighboring exhibits come over to listen and participate in music making.

Left: Karen SATB choir from the Siloam Baptist Development Center performs from memory (they have all learned to sight read western notation as preparation for religious service back in their village communities) at the Global Conference on Music and Missions sponsored by Payap University. **Right:** Chi and wife, Kuewa, rehearse.

The tehnaku has effectively made its comeback after many predictions of its extinction. The *saw tru* pictured here was never as well-known or written about, and its demise went relatively unnoticed and unlamented in scholarship. Chi is working with communities around Chiang Mai, Tak, and Petchaburi province and in the Karen state across the border of Thailand to recreate, reimagine, and reintroduce the instrument. It has not reached the iconic status that the tehnaku currently enjoys, but some communities are taking notice. The Facebook discussion above translates as:

> *Any community that has songs and art but has no one to sing or play cannot be called a community. But any community that has songs, singers, and instrumentalists is truly a community. The "Saw tru" is a pgak'nyaw instrument. Though it was only spoken of in "Kimae" (the pgak'nyaw word for Chiang Mai) as just a legend, it really does exist deep in the village of Bang Kloi of Kaeng Krajan district, Petchaburi Province. A people and their language go together. What happens if the language is lost? This is one way to think of it.*
>
> *And to those who say, "Oh, I really want to hear this music!" I respond that it sounds like a violin, but I think it's harder to play. There are 2-3 tight strings, a thin and long rod of whittled bamboo that you pull across the strings while stopping the strings similar to the guitar. But there is no studio or library where you can go and learn. You can only use your memory. The most important thing is to have it produce a moaning sound. What does it say to us?*

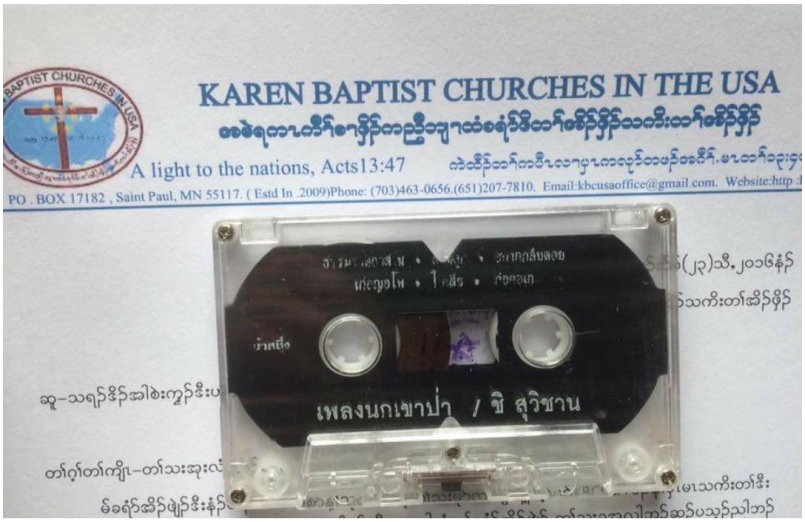
Posts

Chi Suwichan

8 hrs •

เพลงนกเขาป่า เป็นอัลบั้มแรก ออกมาราวปี 2004 แรกเริ่มในรูปแบบ ตลับเทป ก่อนเปลี่ยนรูปแบบเป็นแผ่นซีดี จนหลายคนอาจลืมไปแล้วว่าครั้งหนึ่งผมเคยออกอัลบั้มเพลงในรูปแบบตลับเทป มากกว่าการทวนความจำแล้ว ผมแปลกใจไม่น้อยที่เจ้าของบ้านพกตลับเทปม้วนนี้ติดตัวตอนอพยพจากค่ายผู้ลี้ภัยชายแดนไทย-พม่าสู่สหรัฐอเมริกา "มันเป็นหนึ่งในความทรงจำจากปกาเกอะญอและประเทศไทย" เขาบอกผม. สำหรับผมมันจะเป็น "หนึ่งในความทรงจำจากปกาเกอะญอในอเมริกา" เช่นกัน. ปล.คืนนี้คอนเสิร์ตที่ St.Paul ,Minnesota.USA

See Translation



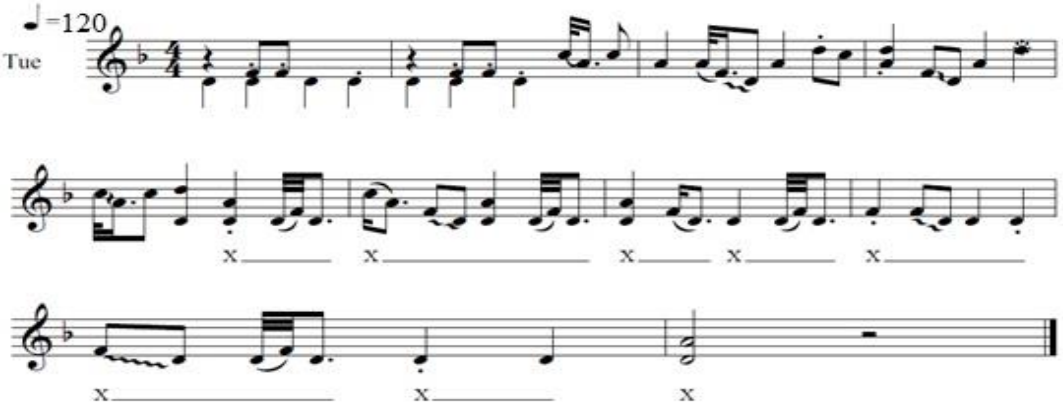
Write a comment...

Another facebook post from Chi on a visit to Karen communities in the US in 2015 for New Year performances and presentations. Here, as with the Akha and Lahu cases, a combination of old and new media converge to help organize and imagine a wider ethnic we-self. In this post, Chi talks about how surprised he was to find his host, a Karen refugee who migrated to the US from the camps along the Thai-Burma border, had brought one thing with him to remind him of the Karen in Thailand: Chi's first album from 2004 on cassette tape (*Mountain Forest Birds*).

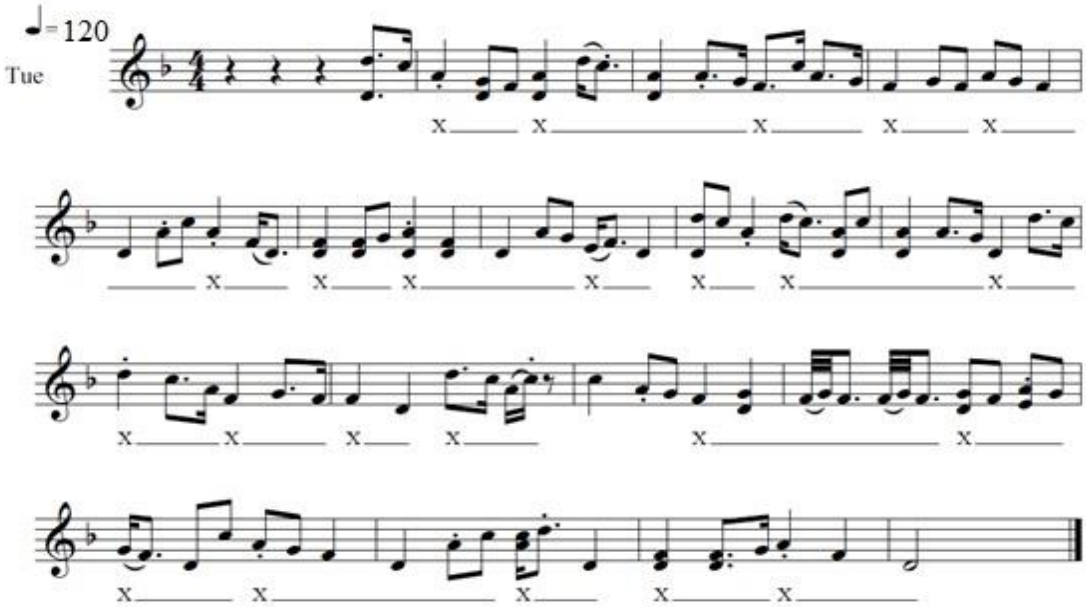
Chi likewise expresses his gratitude and sees this as something he will carry with him from the Karen in America when he returns to Thailand as a remembrance. In these exchanges, the ethnic we-self is confirmed in musical artifacts in face-to-face encounters and also broadcast globally via social media.

Chapter 4, Appendix 1a. Transcribed music-dance steps for the *Tue* (3-string plucked chordophone). *Ajaan* Ja Le, ritual specialist for Ja Thaw's village, demonstrated each of these pieces while tapping his foot to show where the male dance steps would land. They are marked with an X in the transcription. As mentioned earlier, there are two means of stopping the string on the neck: the player can use the fleshy part of his finger to produce a dead, or closed, sound (here marked with a staccato dot) or they can use their fingernail for a cleaner sound that rings. As these demonstrations took place by the hearth in his house on the eve of festivities, background conversations are present in the recordings.

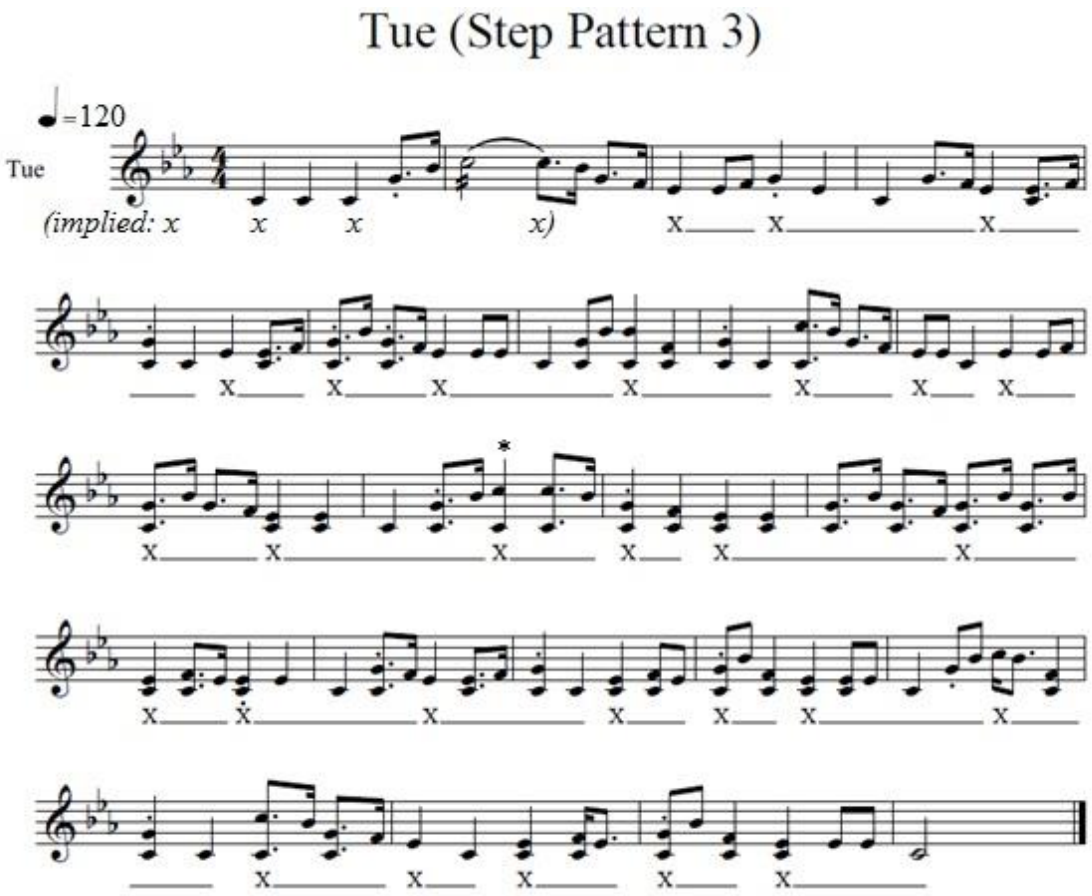
Tue (Step Pattern 1)



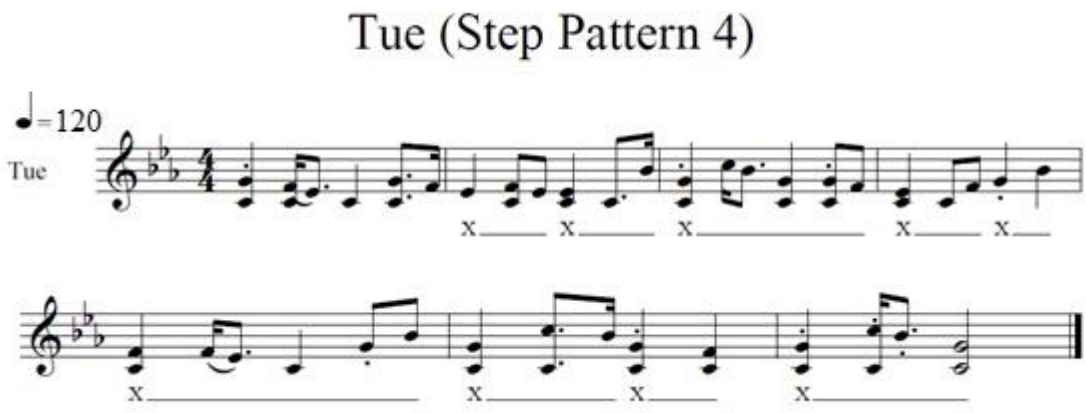
Tue (Step Pattern 2)



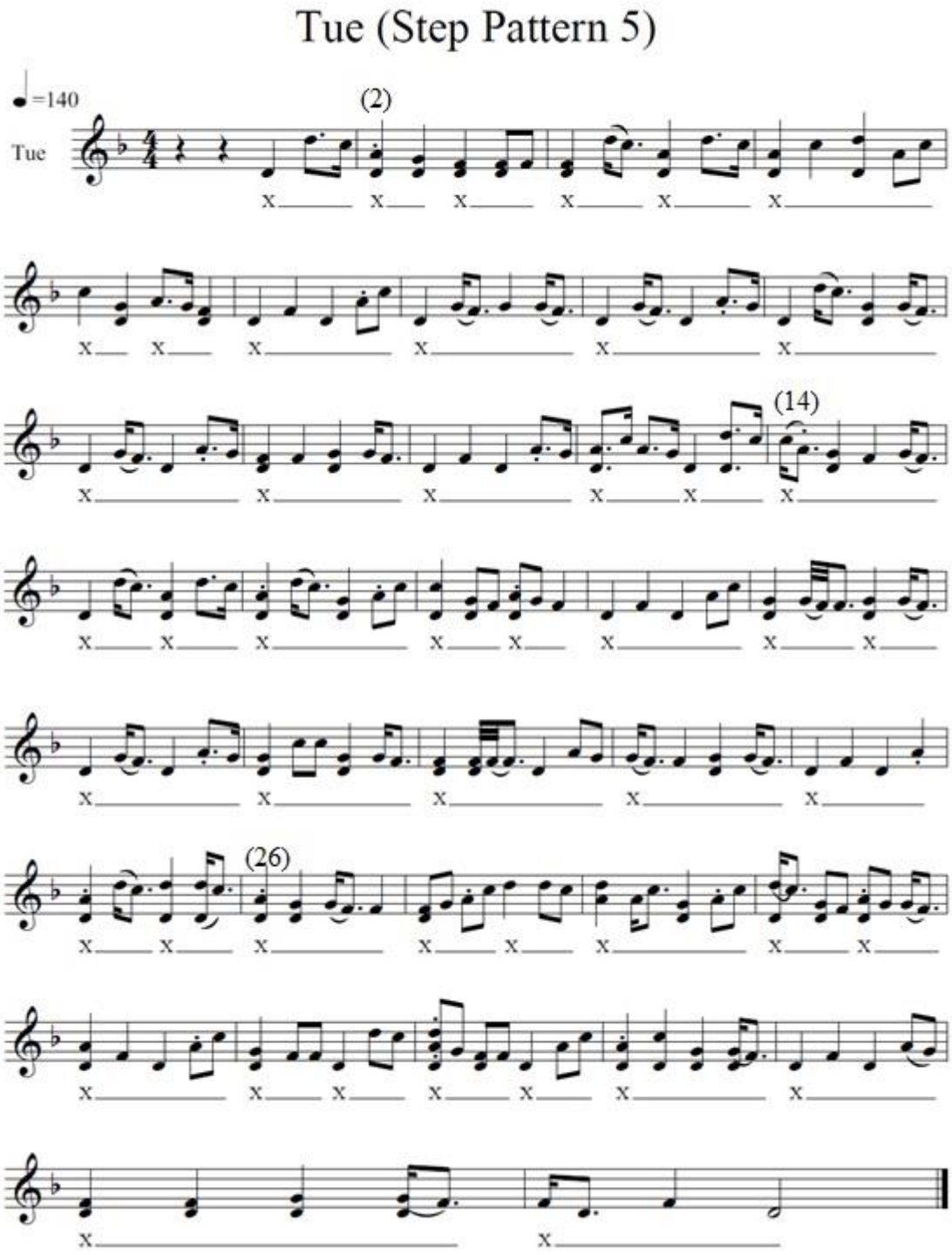
The above examples do not repeat or begin "at the top" and do not end at the final note in the pattern, making notation of the start of the cycle difficult. The step pattern for #2 is LssLssLssLssssL (where L denotes "long," a Step + rest, making a single measure = 2 shorts)



Embellishments make this one ambiguous, but the cycle does start again at the asterisk (measure 11). Pattern is ssLLssLLssLLssssL (12 measure step pattern) [CD Track 24]

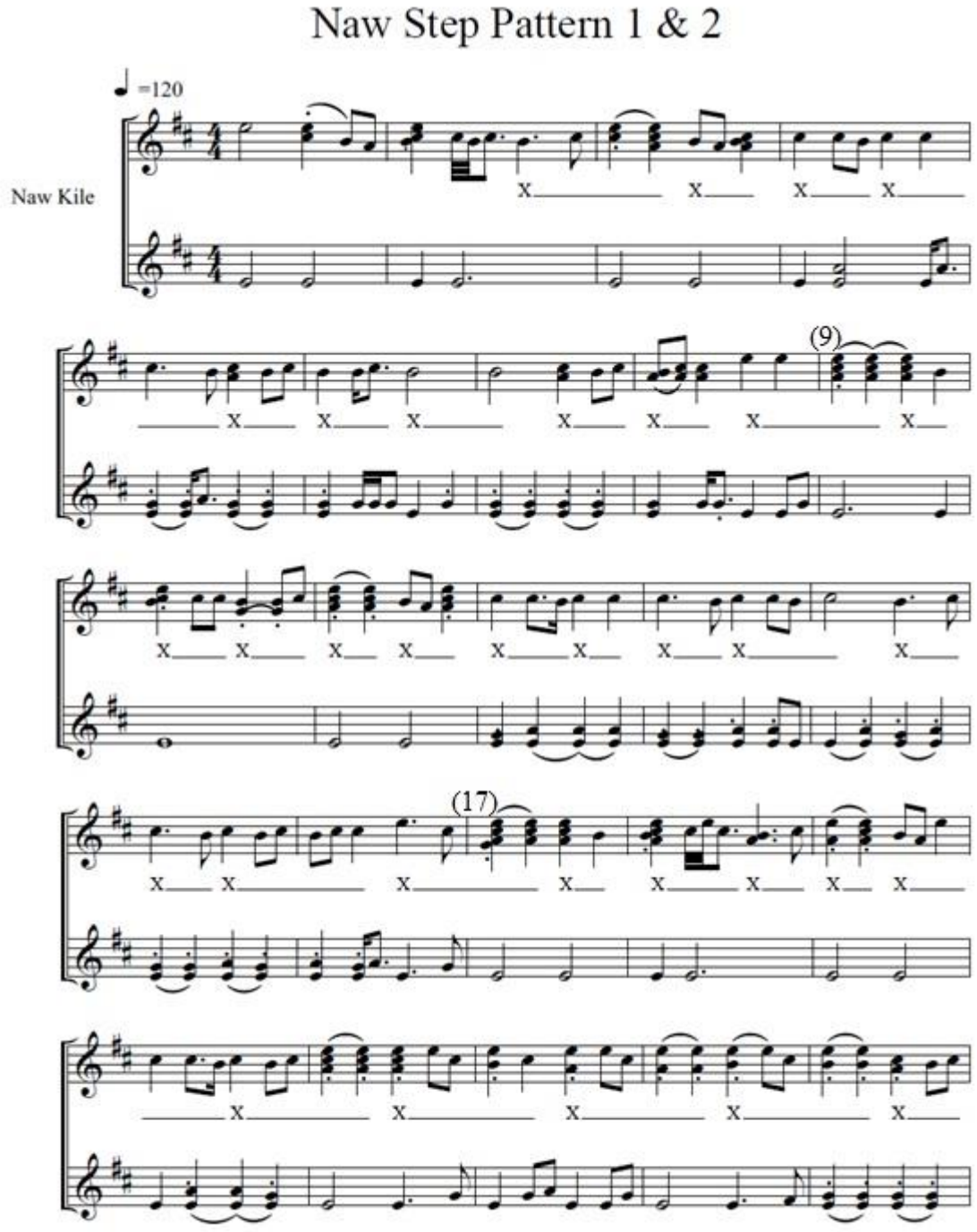


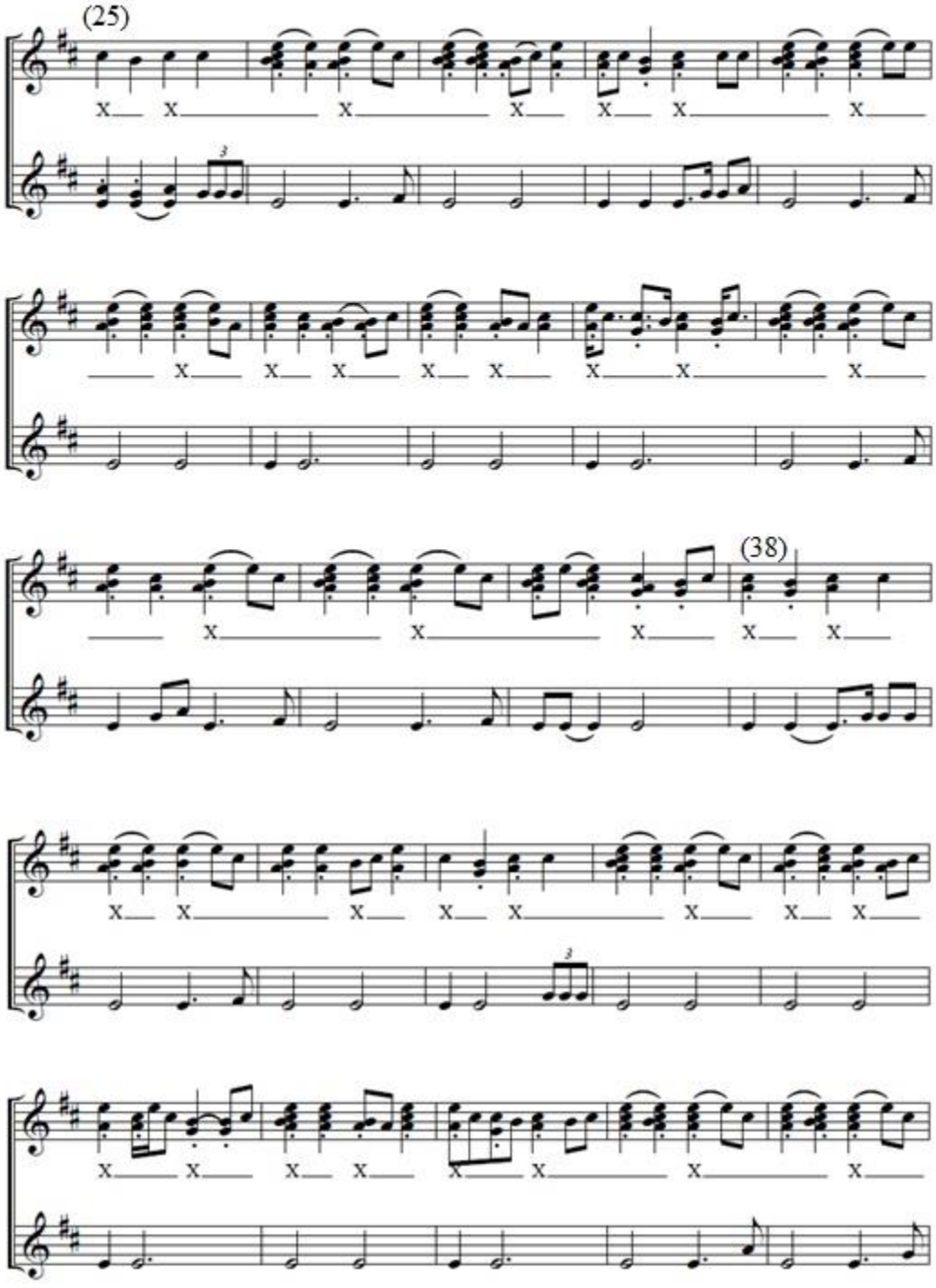
Pattern for 4: ssLssLssL (6 bars) [CD track 25]



Step pattern 5 repeats in 12-bar cycles at mm 2, 14, and 26 (Dance Step: ssLssLssLssssLLLL) [CD track 26]

Chapter 4, Appendix 1b. Transcriptions of *Naw Kile* with male steps. These are noted with double staff notation to try and account for the polyphonic instrument (five pipes). Note that the G natural sometimes sounds closer to an F# when overblown, but I have chosen to notate each pipe as a note so as to avoid confusion (to write in an F# sometimes and a G natural other times might be a better rendition of the sound heard, but it can also give the impression of an extra pipe). Cycles are marked by the measure number they start at (see notes at the end of this transcription). Pattern 1 is 8 measures; pattern 2 is 13. [CD track 16]

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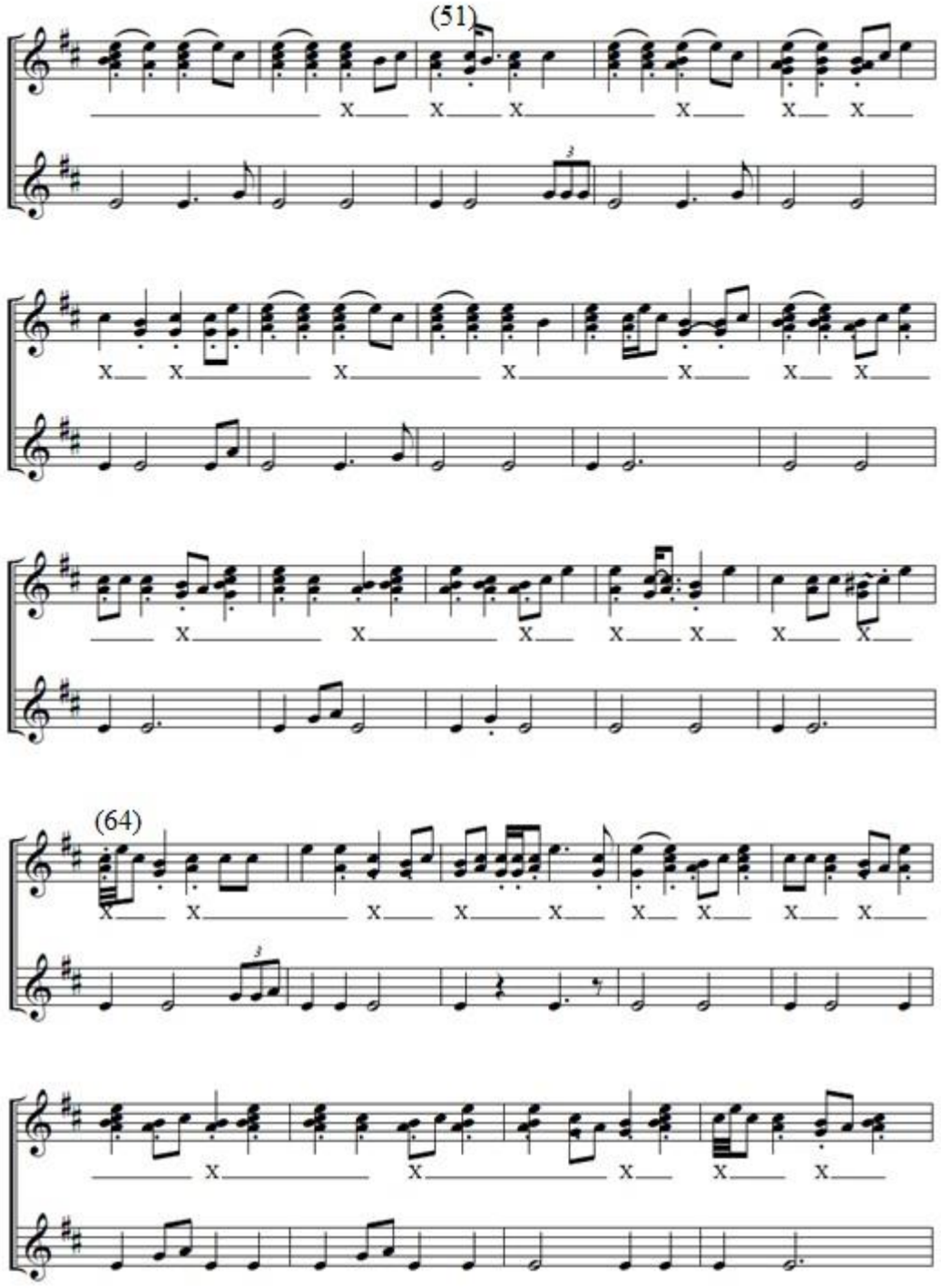
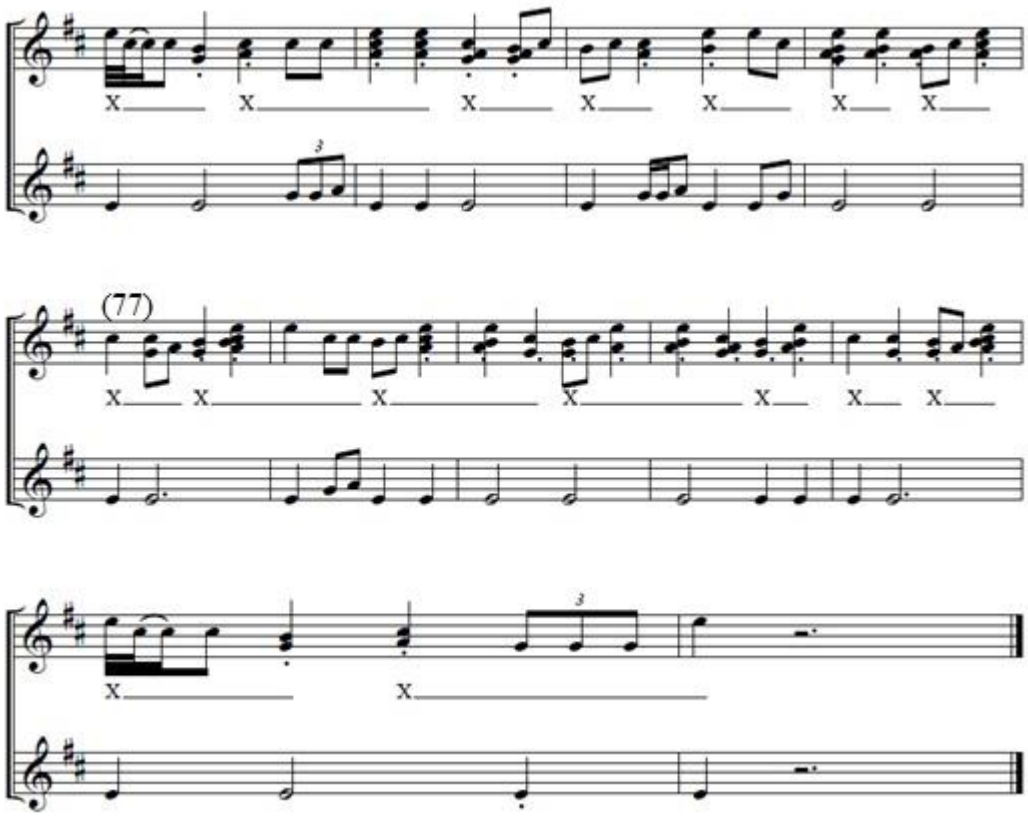
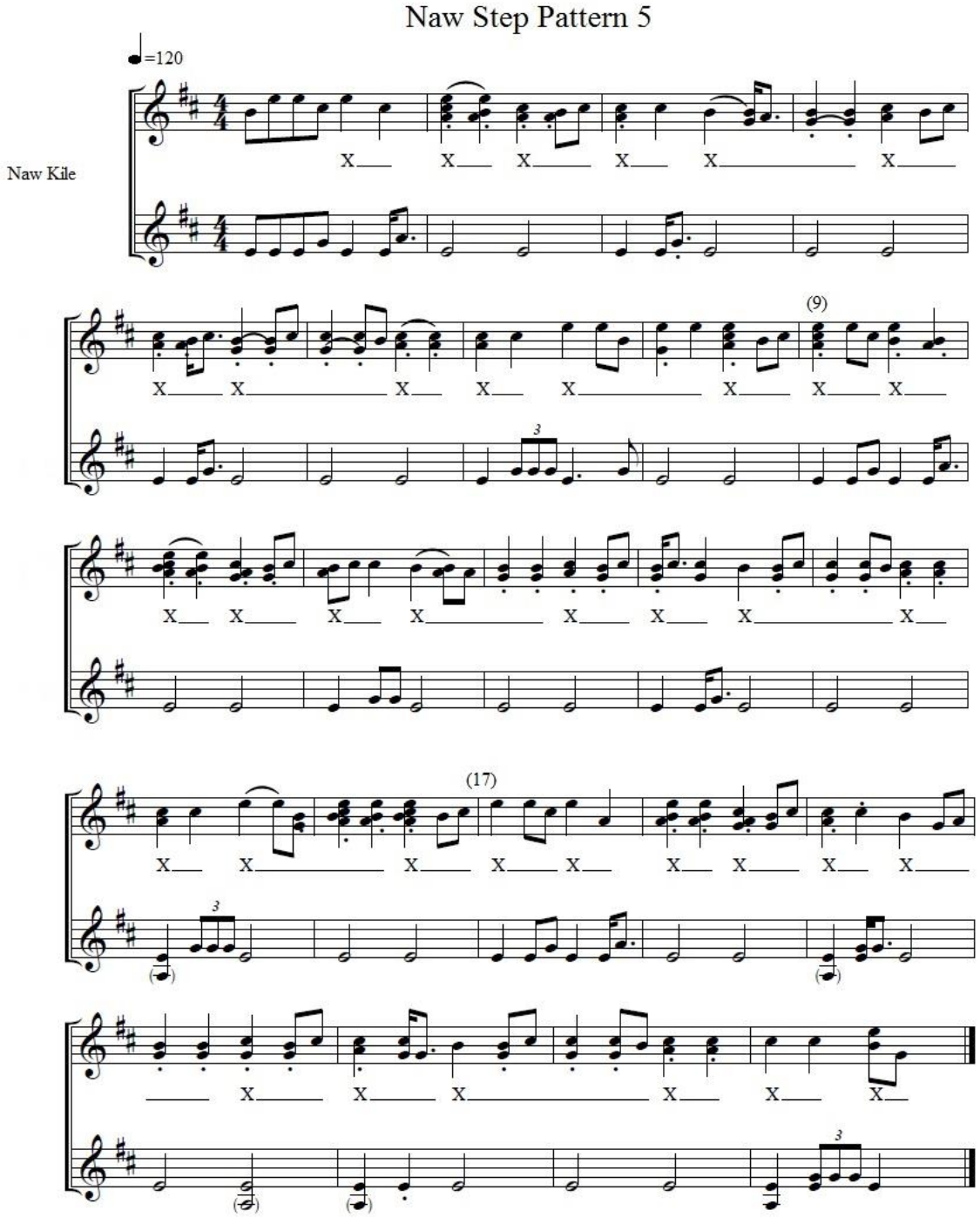

(51)
(64)

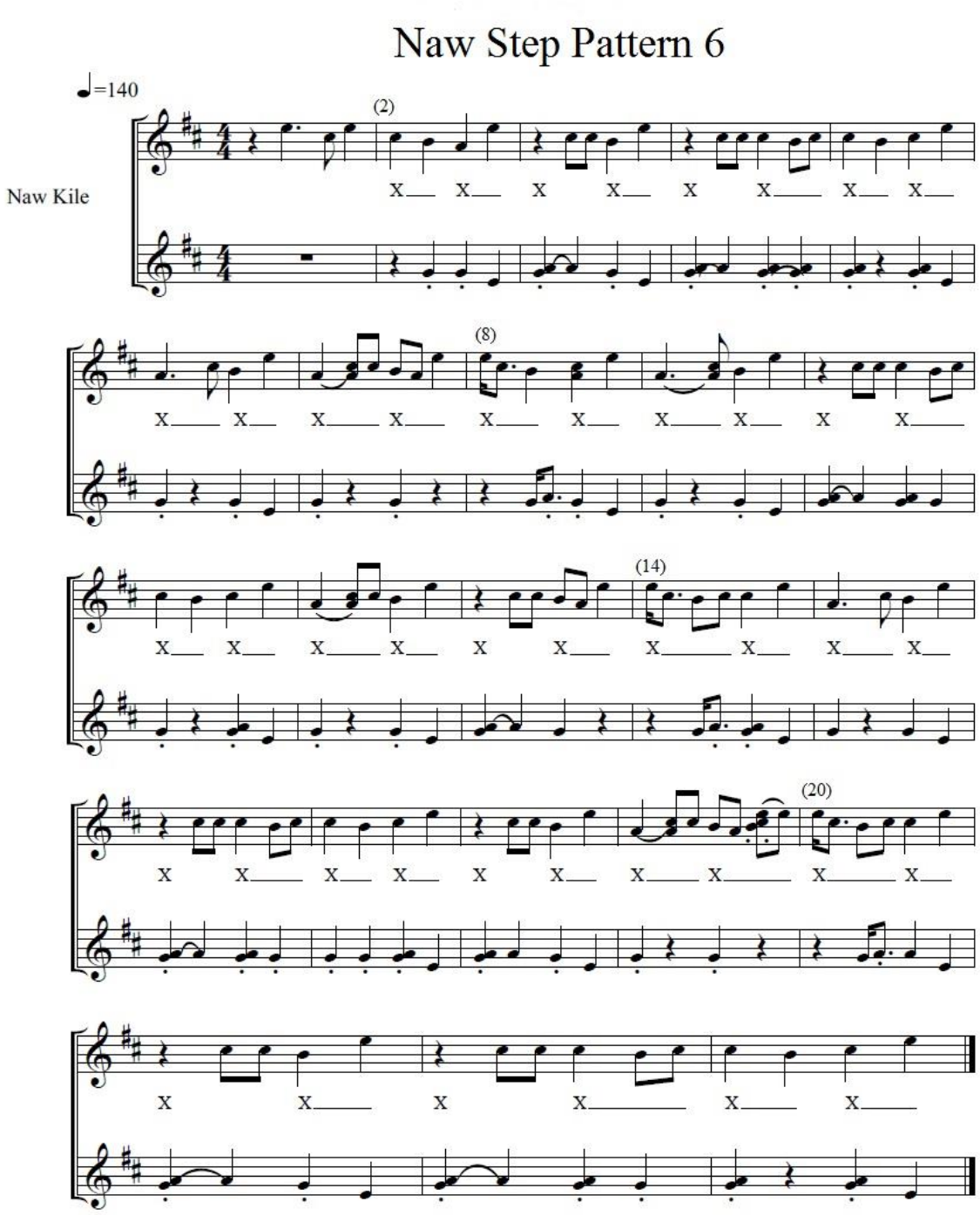


In this performance, Ja Le plays the first dance pattern (8 bars long, with slight melodic variation throughout). The top of each cycle of the first pattern is marked with a held E for three beats (measures 1, 9, and 17). He then transitions to the second step pattern, a 13-beat cycle (marked by a clear melody of CCBC that eventually gets more elaborate and embellished. See measures 25, 38, 51, 64, and 77).

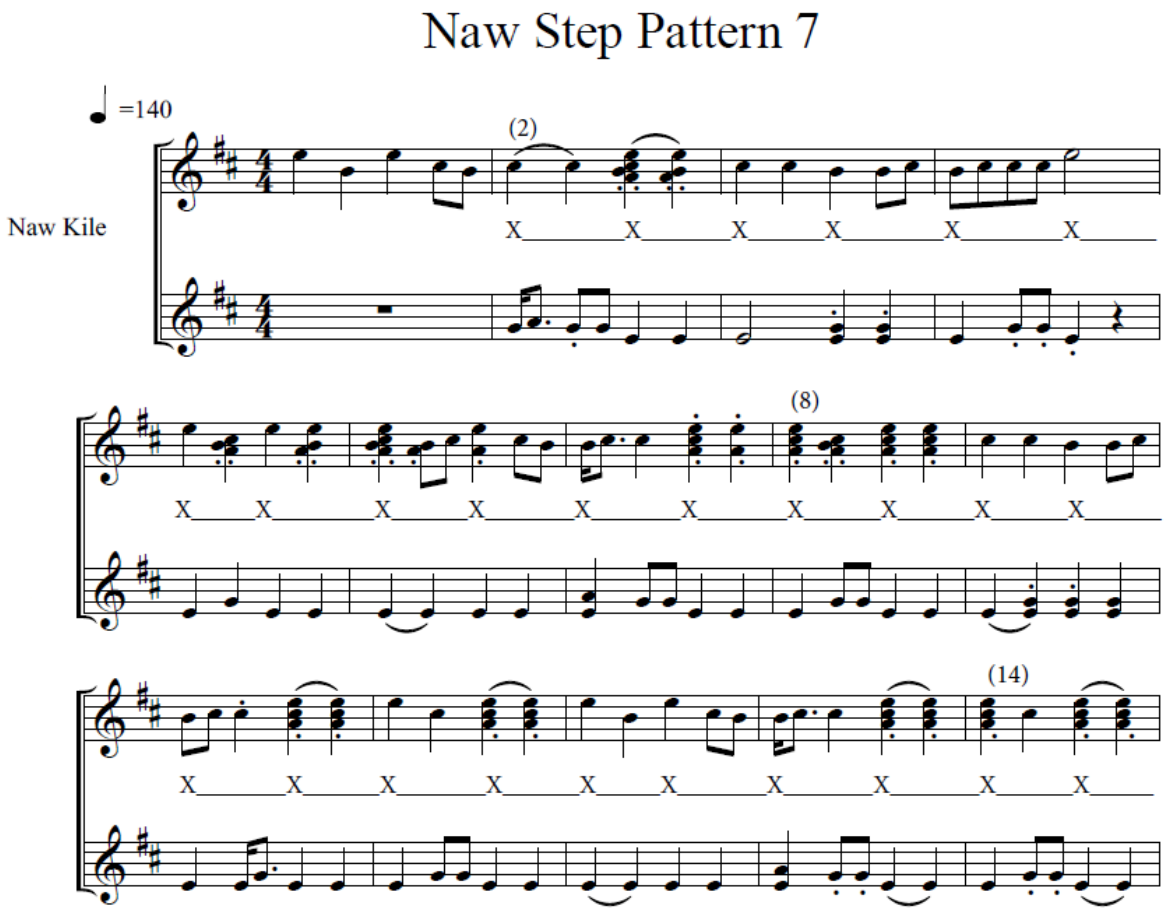
Chapter 4, Appendix 1c. Transcription of *naw kile* step pattern 5 (patterns 3 and 4 were included in the body of the chapter, figure 16, and need not be replicated here). This step is another cycle of 8 beats, repeating (with variation) at measures 9 and 17. Step pattern: sssssLssLssLs [CD Track 18]

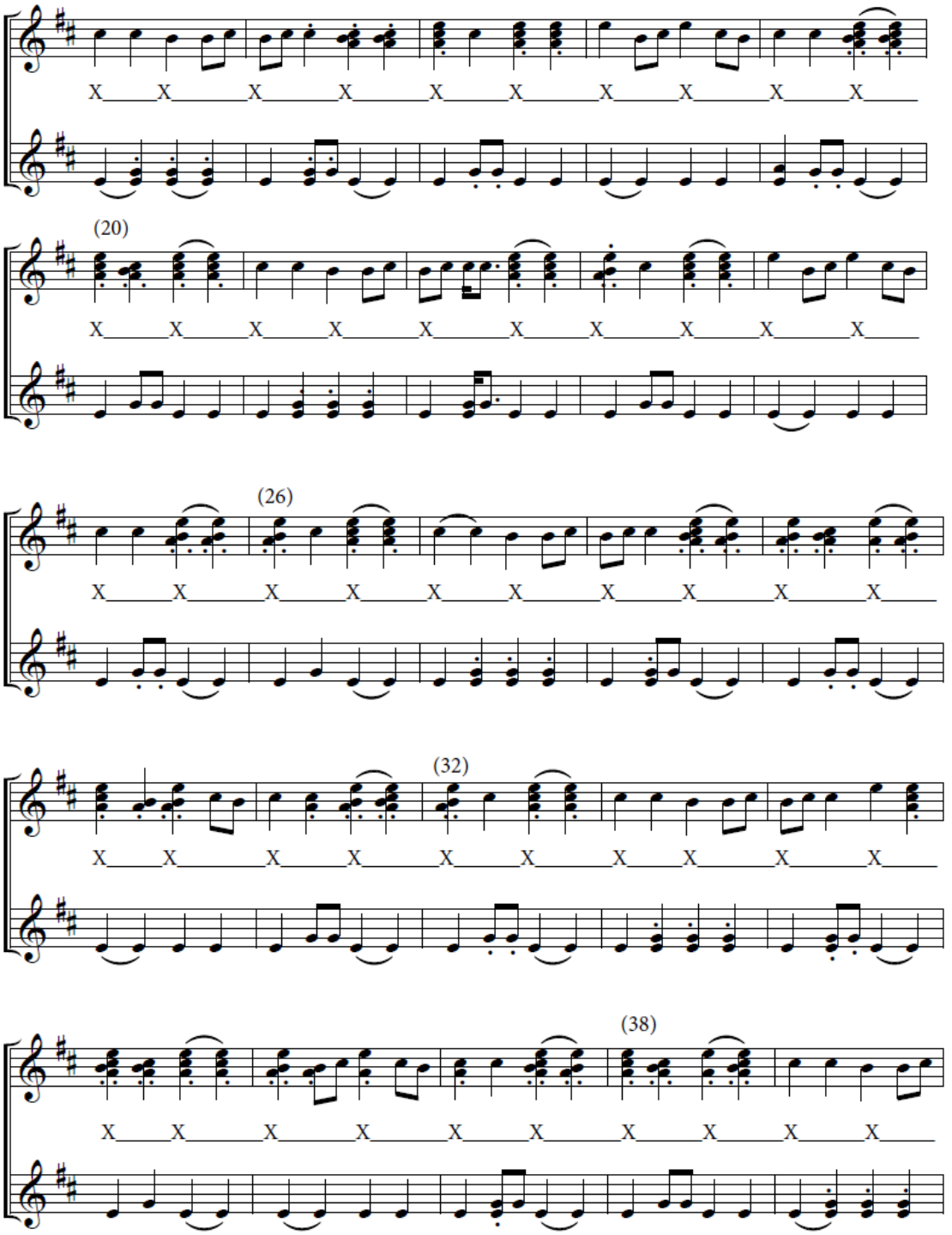


Chapter 4, Appendix 1d. *Naw Kile* step pattern 6. This pattern shows repeated cycles of 6 bars. The step pattern is one of the easiest to follow, consisting only of short stomps (sssssssssss). [CD Track 19]



Chapter 4, Appendix 1e. *Naw Kile* step pattern 7. Pattern 7 also features 6-measure patterns with march-like regular stomps (sssssssssss). [CD track 20]




(20)
(26)
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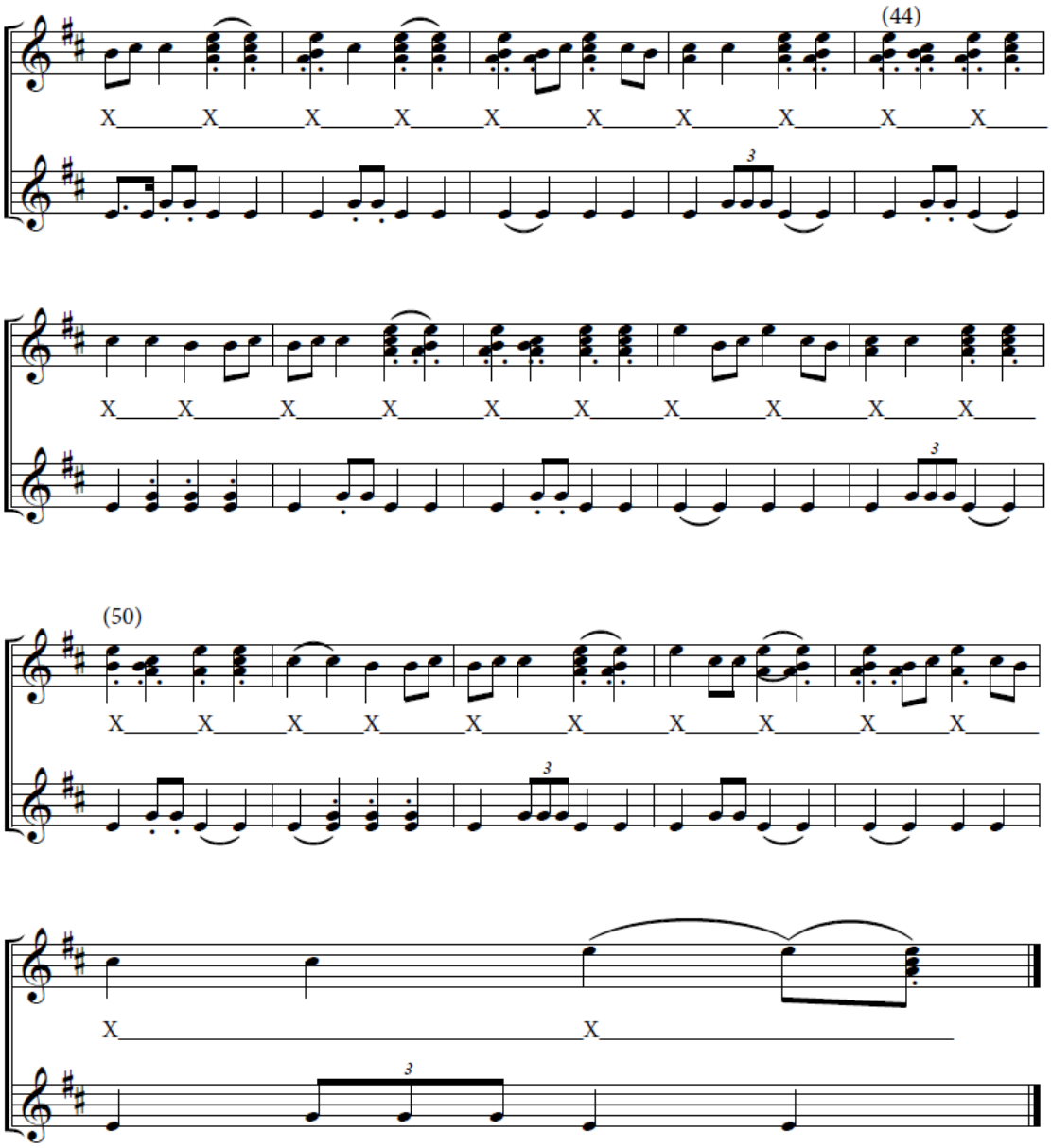
(38)


(44)
(50)

Chapter 4, Appendix 2. Pictures from Ban Musoe village, surroundings, and Lahu New Year activities.

Agriculture tour: Lahu cabbage fields carpet the hillsides where forests once stood. A few trunks still stand out. Swiddening as a pioneering technique is still strongly discouraged, a situation now requiring the reuse of fields year after year (a technique demanding increased use of chemical fertilizers and insecticides).

View from the top: adventure tourists come through Ban Musoe to see wild elephants, rhododendrons, and the iconic, rocky, and triangular peak of Doi Monjong (*Monjong* means “triangle” in a local language)

Pig slaughters are a mainstay of New Year festivities. The entire village gathers to watch, and the meat is divided and distributed to all homes. Above: the hair is singed off the skin by the men tending the fire after the innards have been removed by the women (gender equality and roles are outlined in many ethnographies of the Lahu). Below: members of ritualist Ja Le's household divide the meat equally (signs of wealth are also observable in the background: concrete enclosed lower portion of the house, yellow satellite dish, and corrugated roofing)

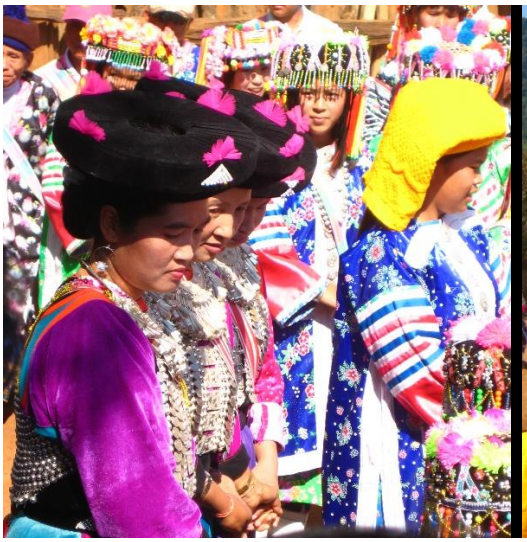
More food: pounded sticky rice cakes (*khapu*) are another constant (also distributed equally, demonstrating Walker's notion of village unity via inclusion. Jones also noticed that villages and households are marked by such consumption and sharing: "The members of a household are defined by the villagers as 'all those who eat the same rice'" (1967: 60)).

The now empty *Ja Khue Kue* (dance circle) offers a space for children to play. Periodically throughout the day, all the villagers must gather here to appeal to the village spirit (*Guifu*). The school was aware of this, too, and Lahu children were excused from class to go join their village for the offering (foreigners were not allowed to enter the circle, and Christian villagers refused to do so, though all were allowed to enter for the dance).

Dancing begins: the opening and closing numbers are marked by the use of the more "serious" instrument, the *naw kuema* [CD Track 27]. These are larger, lower in pitch, and not as loud as the *naw kile*, but gourds are essential for each type of *naw*—the gourd features prominently in Tibeto-Burman as well as Suwannaphum origin stories, where all races of people emerged from one after a flood upon the earth (Proschan; Jones 1967: 86-89; Sujit 2011)

The five-pipe *naw kile*: smaller, higher pitch, and use for the more "fun" performances. The synchronized movement is easy to imagine in this picture, as feet and legs all line up, coordinated by the stomped beat.

Another visual testament to social synchrony and enacted village unity. Dancers from surrounding villages and Thai tourists observe from behind the fence. Eventually the distinctions between each invited group will give way to a larger collective where all are invited to participate.



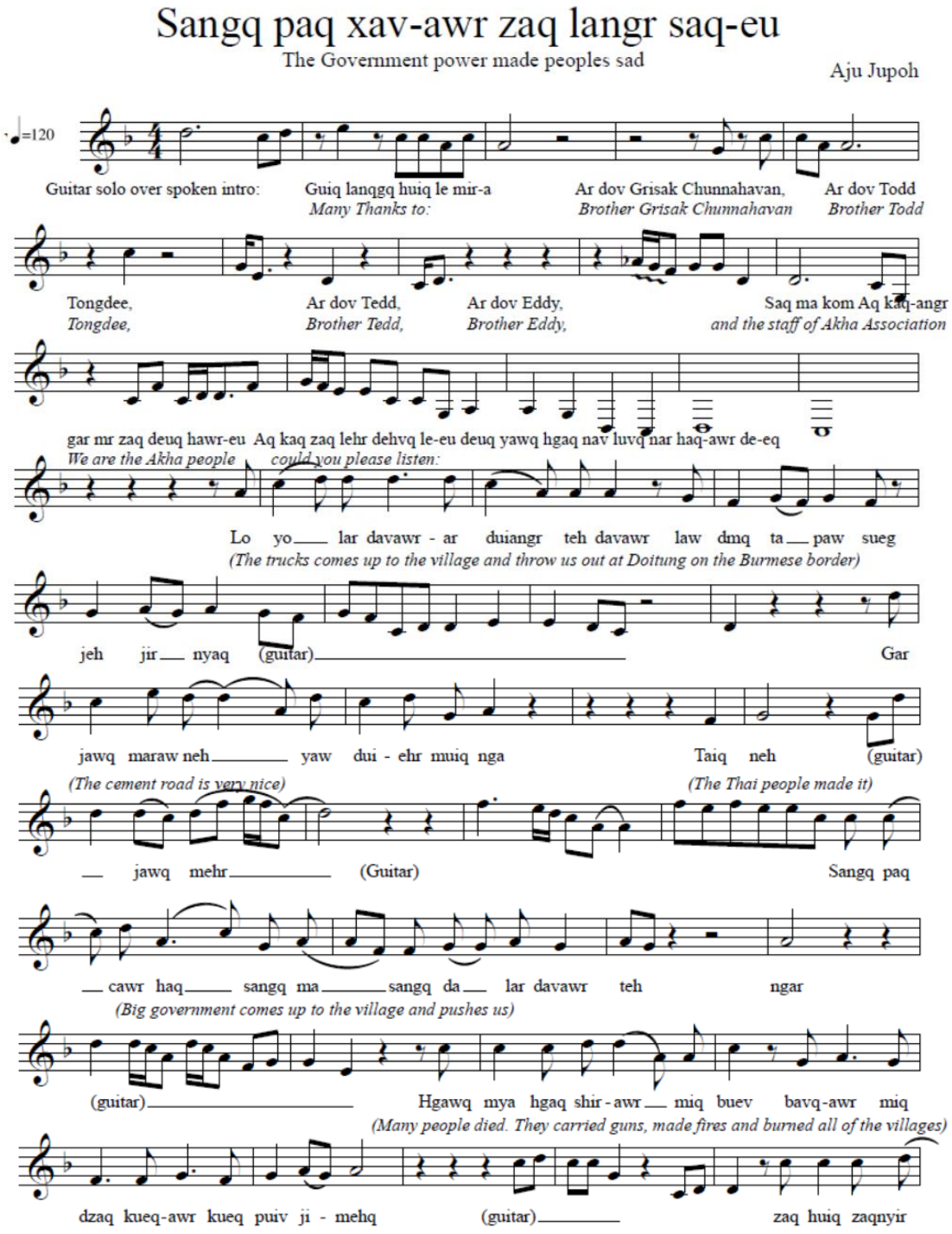
Left: In a show of pan-highland identity and good will, Lisu groups arrive and join in. Their steps are a little different, but the similarities of movement, language, and culture are enough to grant entrance into this we-self.

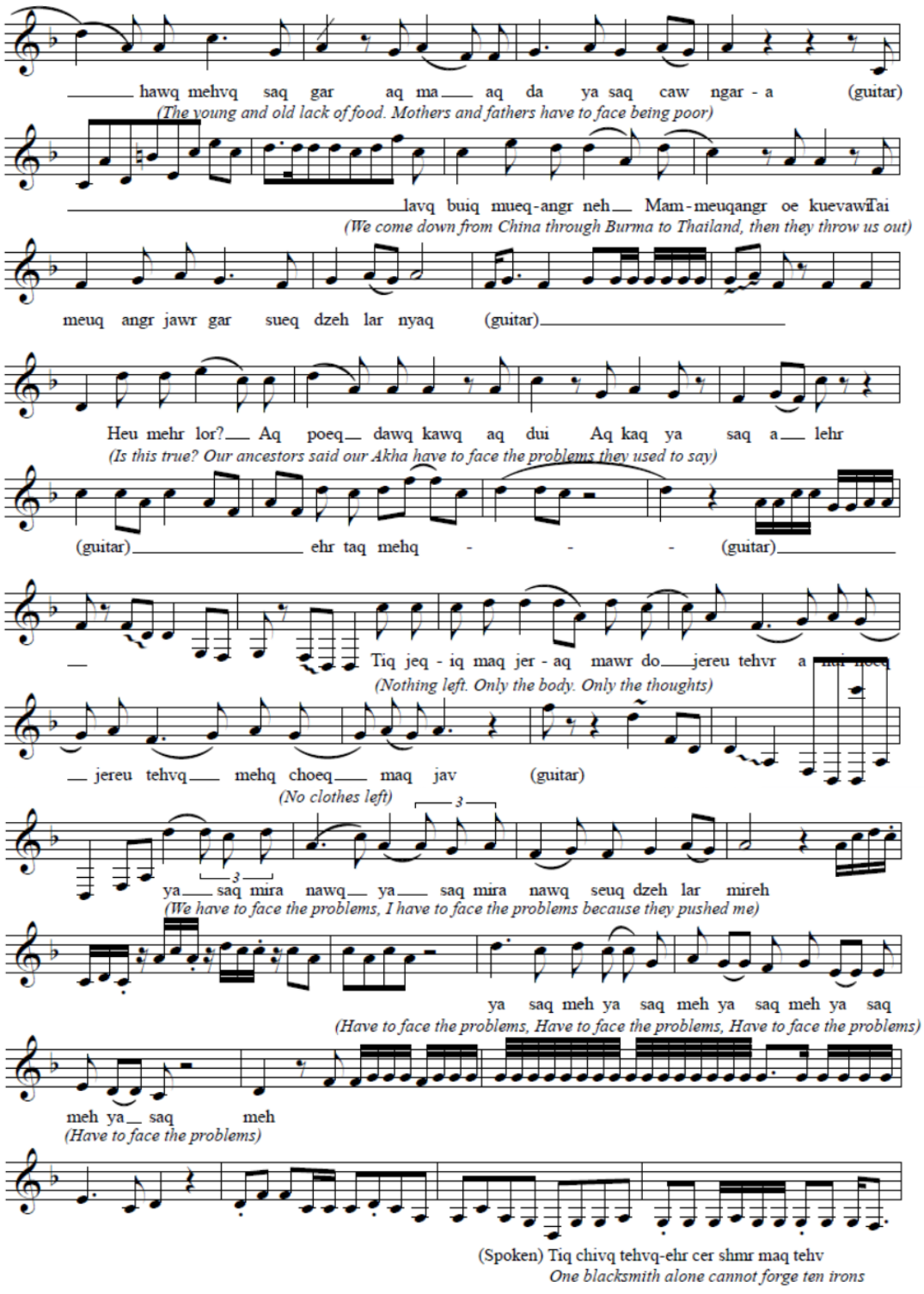
Right: villagers from Ban Musoe (*Nawk*, or "outer") trek out to Ban Musoe *Nai* ("inner") to bring gifts, observe their dance, present a dance of their own, join together, and then travel back to Musoe *Nawk* for the larger gathering.

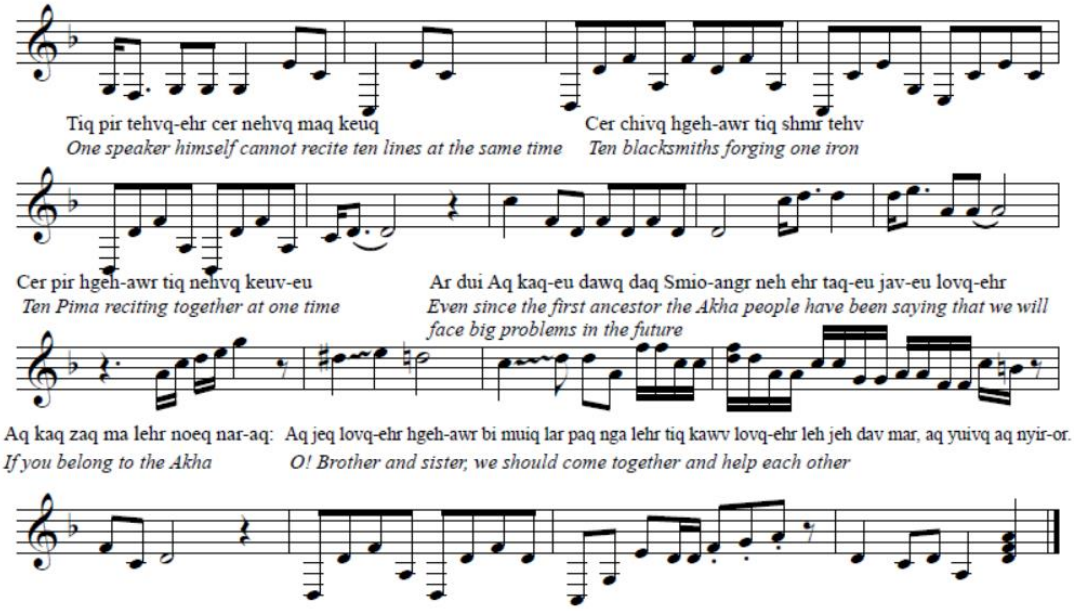
Ja Sa demonstrates *tue* properties while Ja Thaw listens attentively.

Left: *Naw Kuema's* impressive size. Right: Ajaan Ja Le (ritualist) warms beeswax to plug up the *naw kile'*s joints.

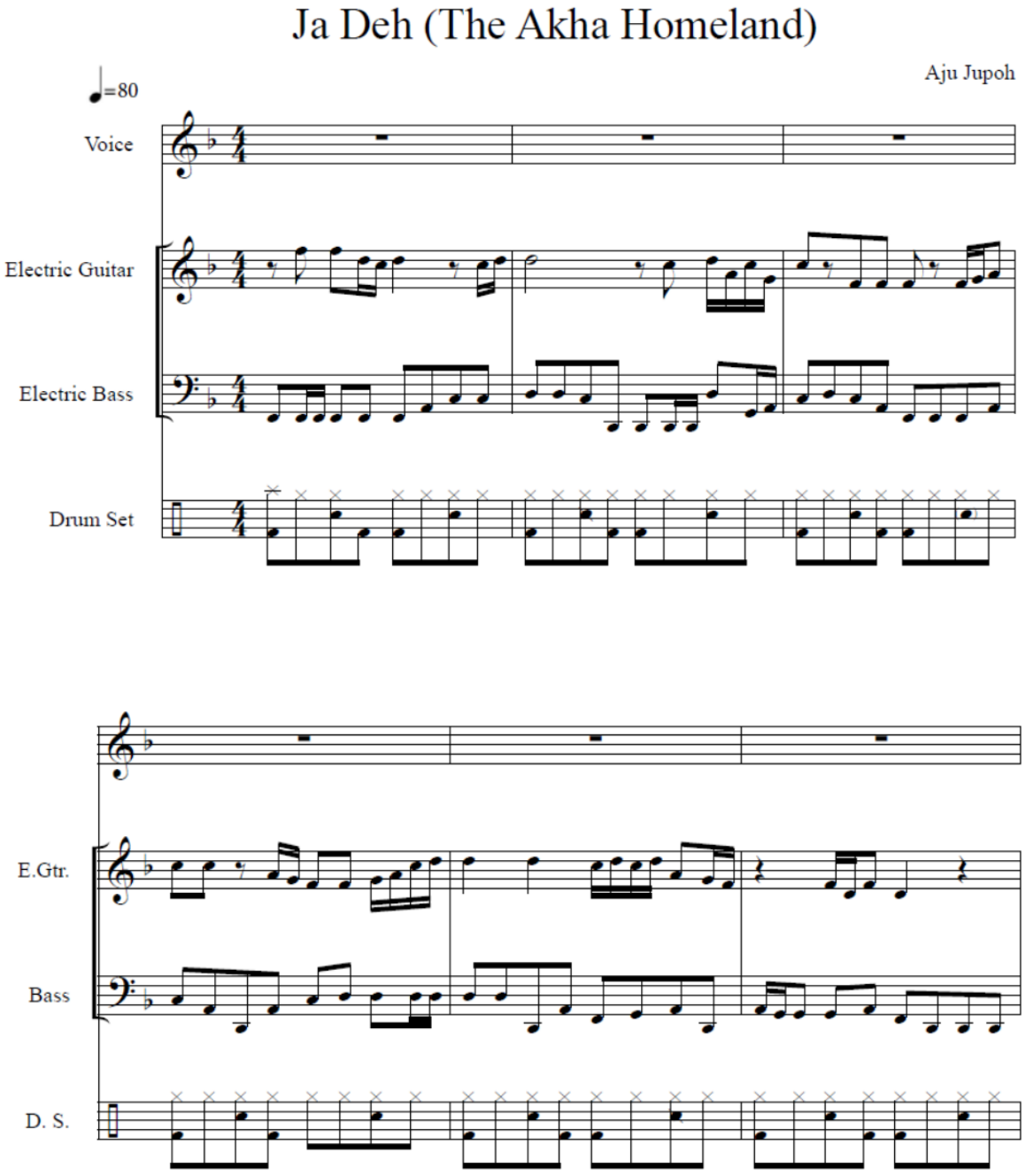
Chapter 5, Appendix 1a. A song referencing some of the more brutal evictions of the Akha by ruling powers in China, Thailand, and Burma. Oppression by lowland outsiders is the norm here, as is the call to unite across borders as one people. (This transcription shows just vocal melody and guitar solo. Not shown is the acoustic guitar arpeggio accompaniment) [CD Track 36]

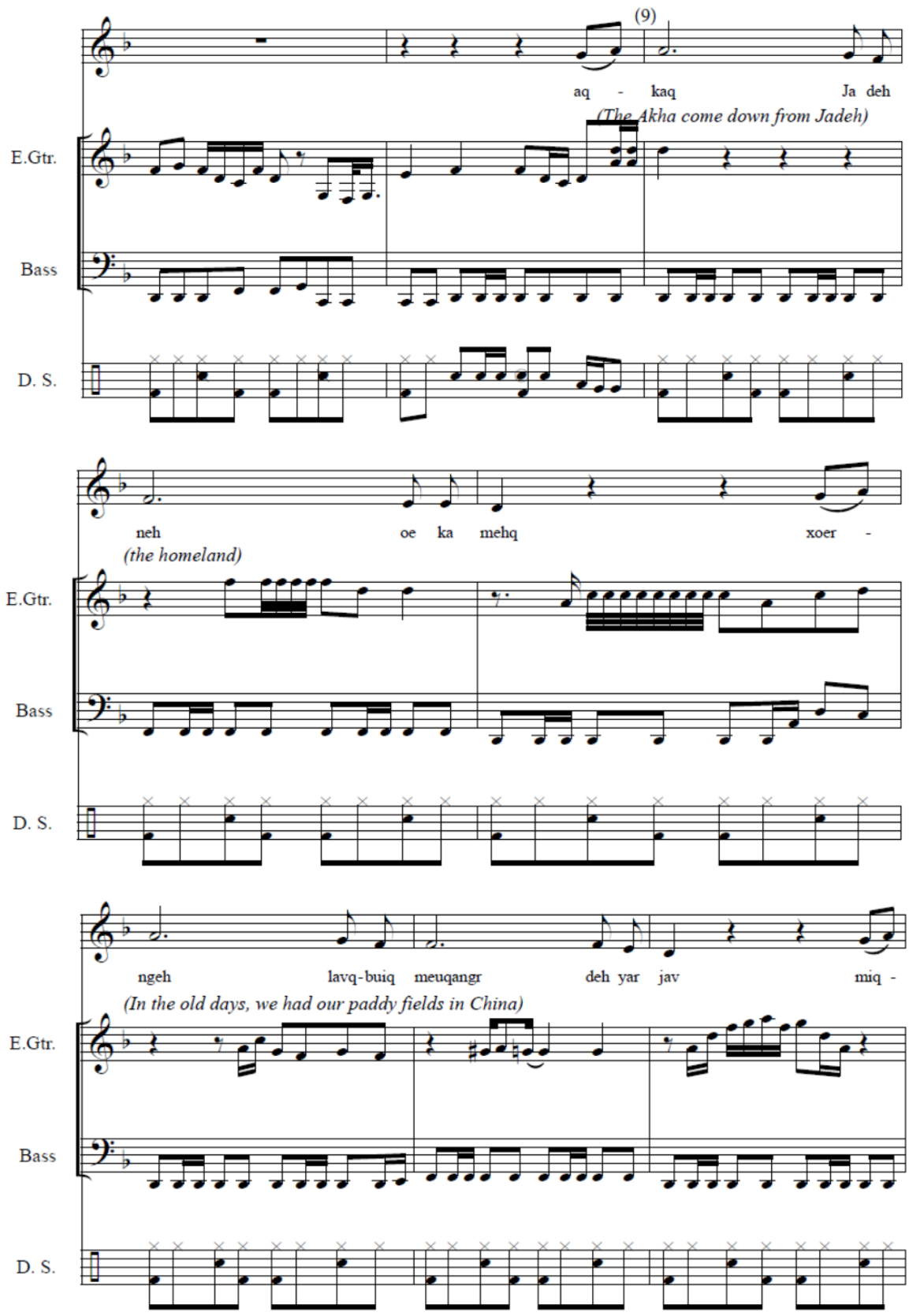


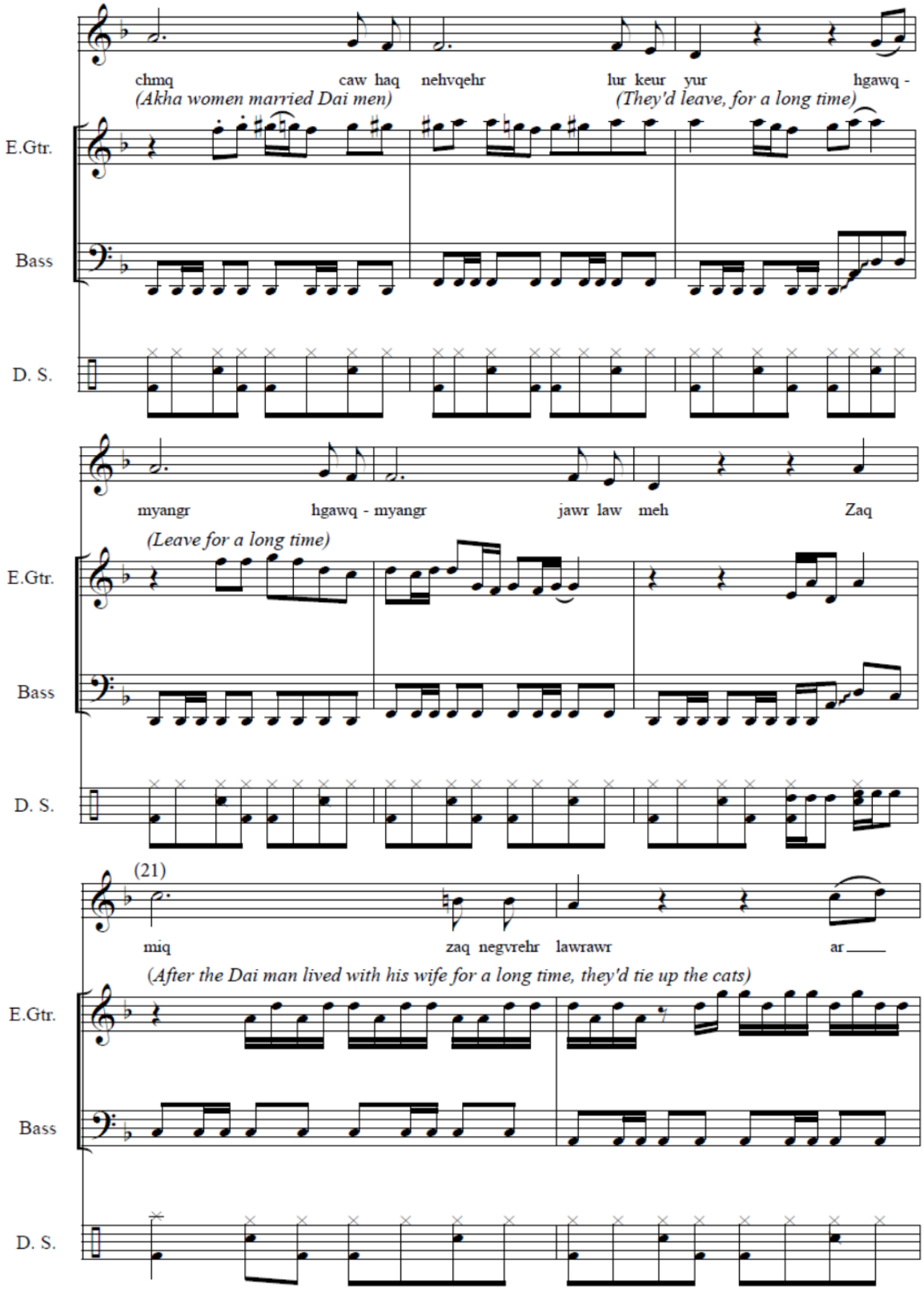

hawq mehvq saq gar aq ma aq da ya saq caw ngar - a (guitar)
(The young and old lack of food. Mothers and fathers have to face being poor)
lavq buiq mueq-angr neh Mam-meuqangr oe kuevawTai
(We come down from China through Burma to Thailand, then they throw us out)
meuq angr jawr gar sueq dzeh lar nyaq (guitar)
Heu mehr lor? Aq poeq dawq kawq aq dui Aq kaq ya saq a lehr
(Is this true? Our ancestors said our Akha have to face the problems they used to say)
(guitar) ehr taq mehq - - - (guitar)
Tiq jeq - iq maq jer - aq mawr do jereu tehvr a
(Nothing left. Only the body. Only the thoughts)
jereu tehvq mehq choeq maq jav (guitar)
(No clothes left)
3
3
ya saq mira nawq ya saq mira nawq seuq dzeh lar mireh
(We have to face the problems, I have to face the problems because they pushed me)
ya saq meh ya saq meh ya saq meh ya saq
(Have to face the problems, Have to face the problems, Have to face the problems)
meh ya saq meh
(Have to face the problems)
(Spoken) Tiq chivq tehvq-ehr cer shmr maq tehv
One blacksmith alone cannot forge ten irons

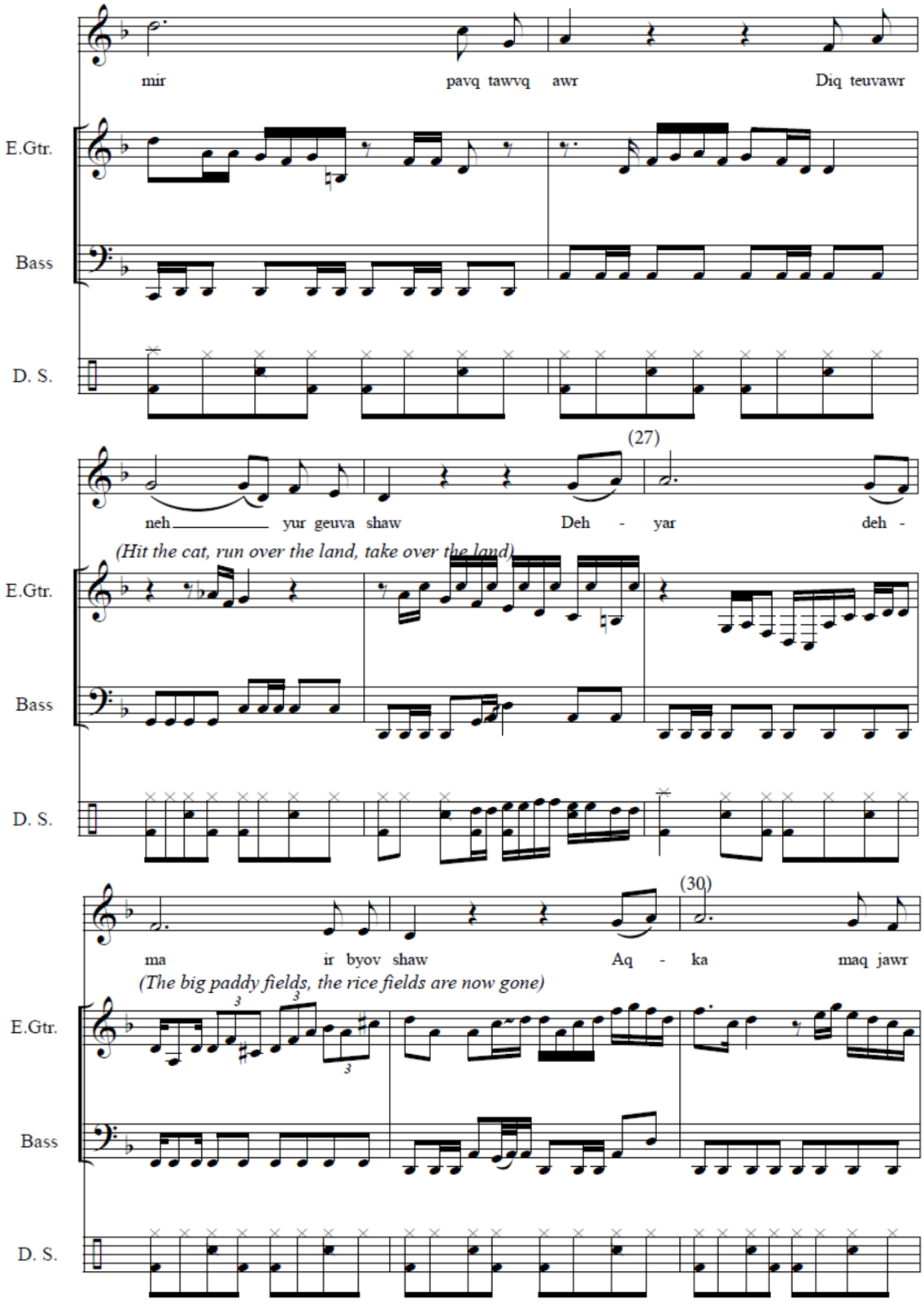

Tiq pir tehvq-ehr cer nehvq maq keuq
One speaker himself cannot recite ten lines at the same time
Cer chivq hgeh-awr tiq shmr tehv
Ten blacksmiths forging one iron
Cer pir hgeh-awr tiq nehvq keuv-eu
Ten Pima reciting together at one time
Ar dui Aq kaq-eu dawq daq Smio-angr neh ehr taq-eu jav-eu lovq-ehr
Even since the first ancestor the Akha people have been saying that we will face big problems in the future
Aq kaq zaq ma lehr noeq nar-aq:
If you belong to the Akha
Aq jeq lovq-ehr hgeh-awr bi nuiq lar paq nga lehr tiq kawv lovq-ehr leh jeh dav mar, aq yuivq aq nyir-or.
O! Brother and sister, we should come together and help each other

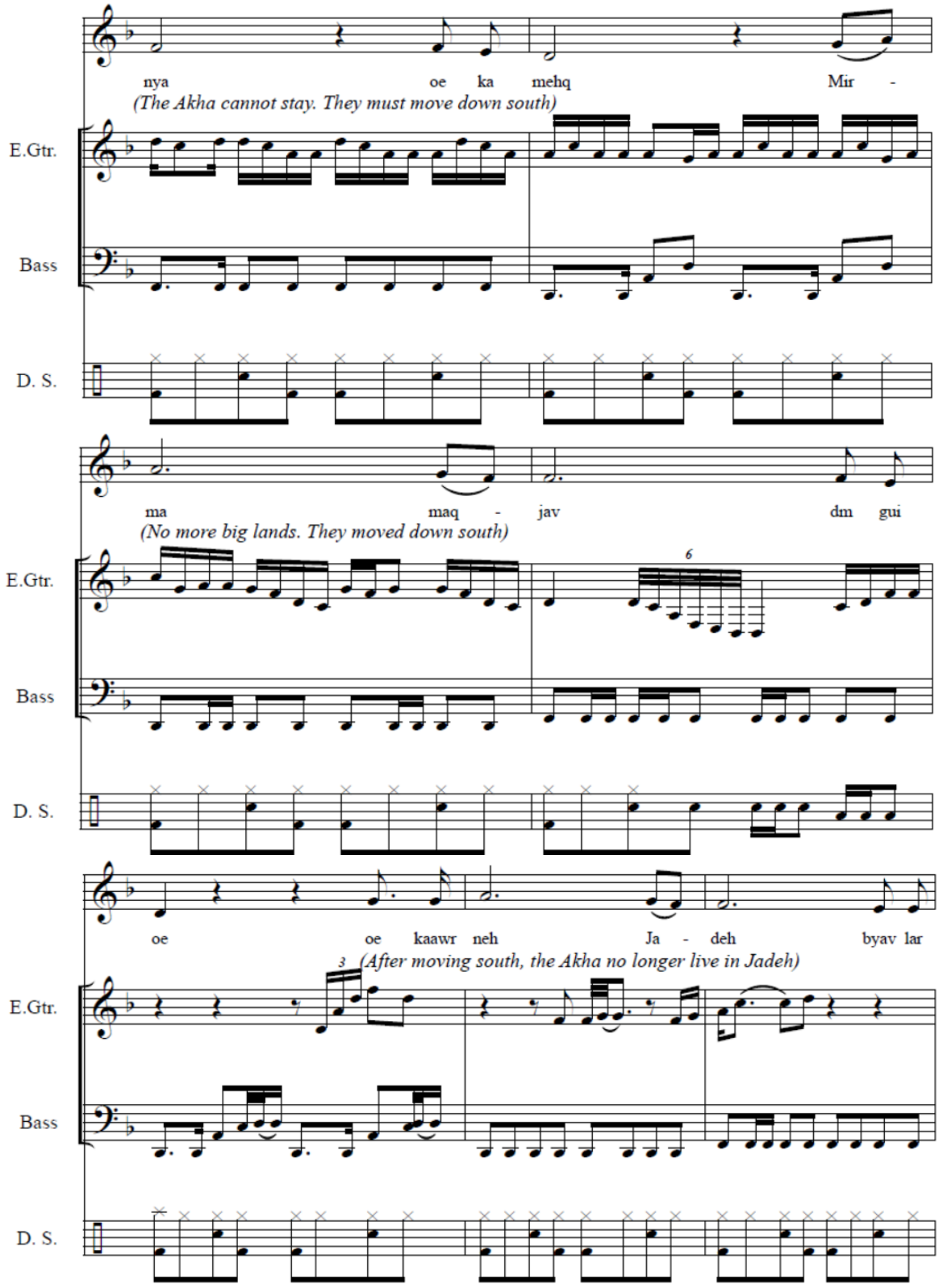
Chapter 5, Appendix 1b. "Ja Deh (the Akha Homeland)" also talks of a southward migration, away from settled Shan/Dai paddy cultivation and to the hills. Alting von Geusau (1999c) insists that opium cultivation was not a traditional practice but rather an adaptive one, one of many after the loss of the homeland. Akha adapted as they were pushed around and out of various lands. Here I have notated almost every instrument, including the rhythm section, to show the complete absence of any traditional instruments. Songs such as this fit fully into lowland modern genres. [CD track 35]

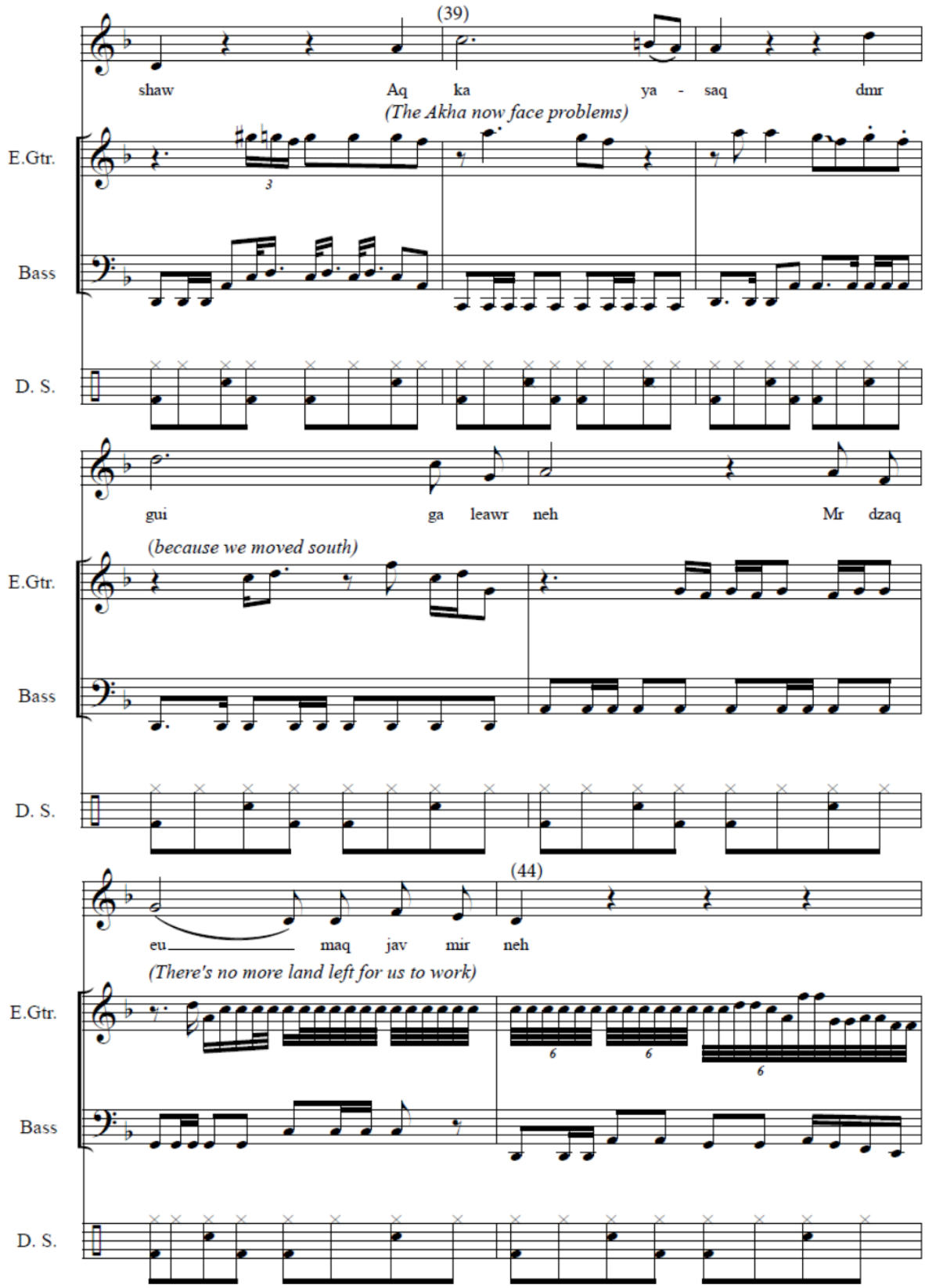


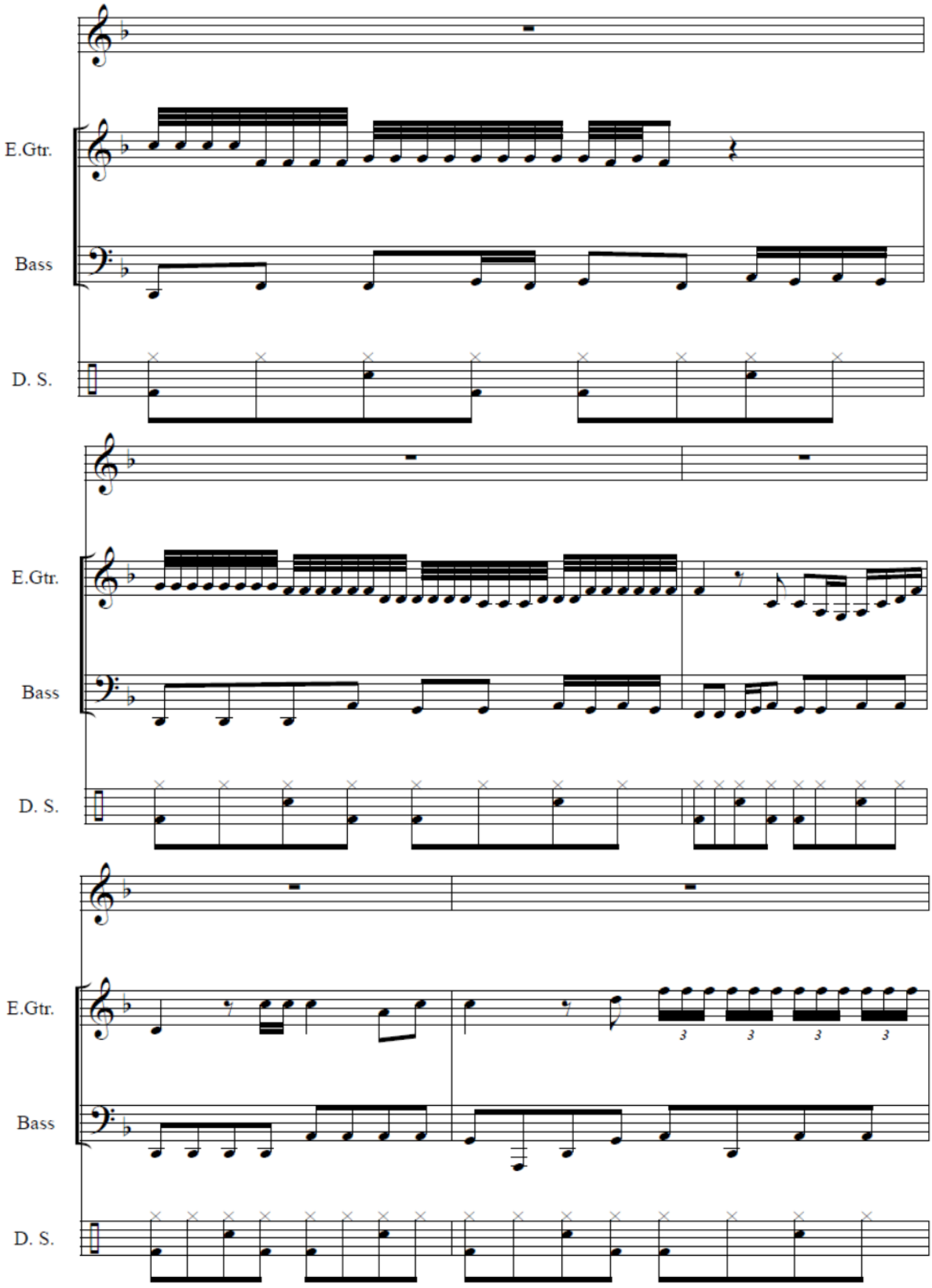

(9)
aq - kaq Ja deh
(The Akha come down from Jadeh)
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.
neh oe ka mehq xoer -
(the homeland)
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.
ngeh lavq-buiq meuqangr deh yar jav miq -
(In the old days, we had our paddy fields in China)
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.

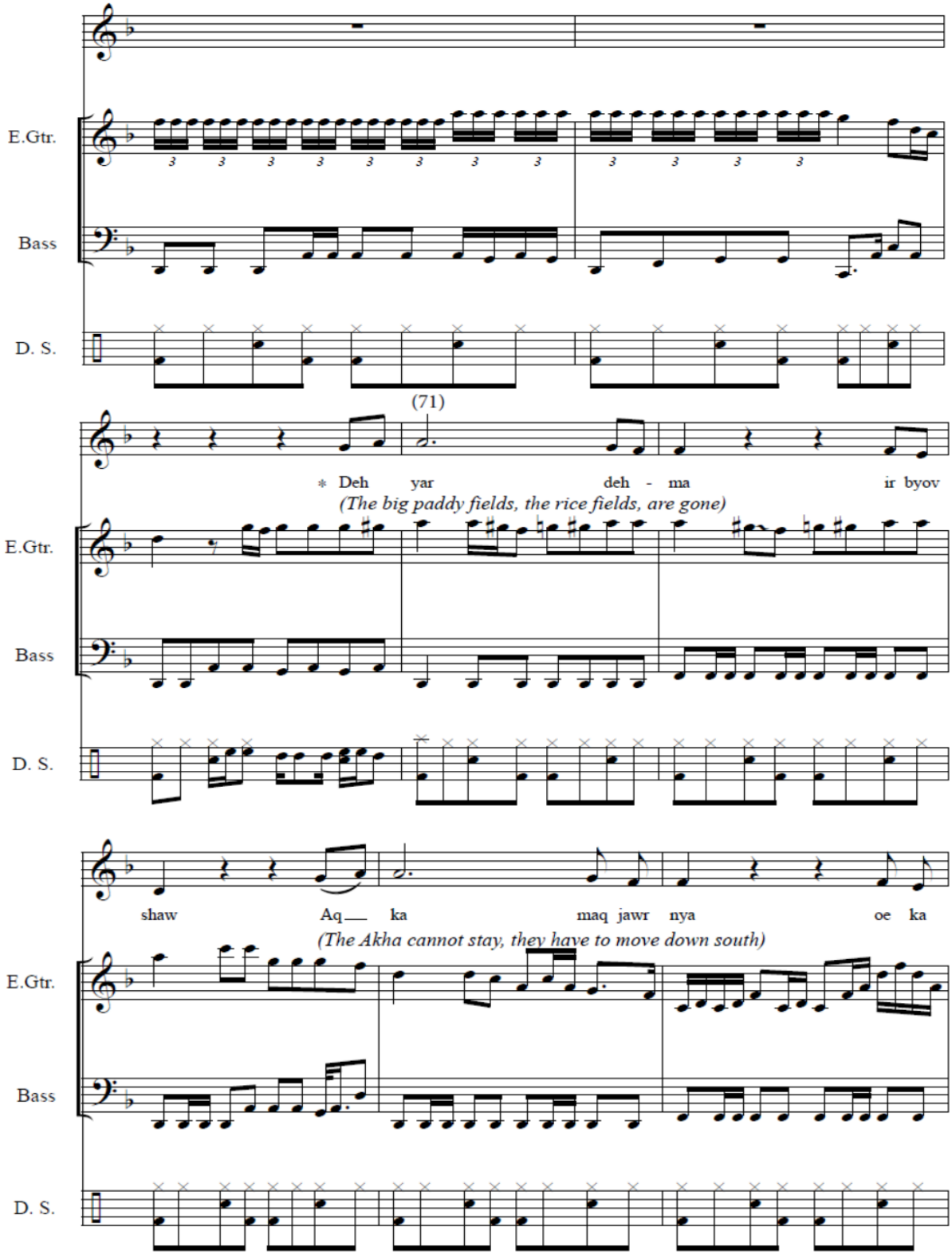

chmq caw haq nehvqehr lur keur yur hgawq -
(Akha women married Dai men)
(They'd leave, for a long time)
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.
myangr hgawq - myangr jawr law meh Zaq
(Leave for a long time)
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.
(21)
miq zaq negvrehr lawrawr ar
(After the Dai man lived with his wife for a long time, they'd tie up the cats)
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.


mir pavq tawvq awr Diq teuvawr
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.
(27)
neh yur geuva shaw Deh - yar deh -
(Hit the cat, run over the land, take over the land)
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.
(30)
ma ir byov shaw Aq - ka maq jawr
(The big paddy fields, the rice fields are now gone)
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.

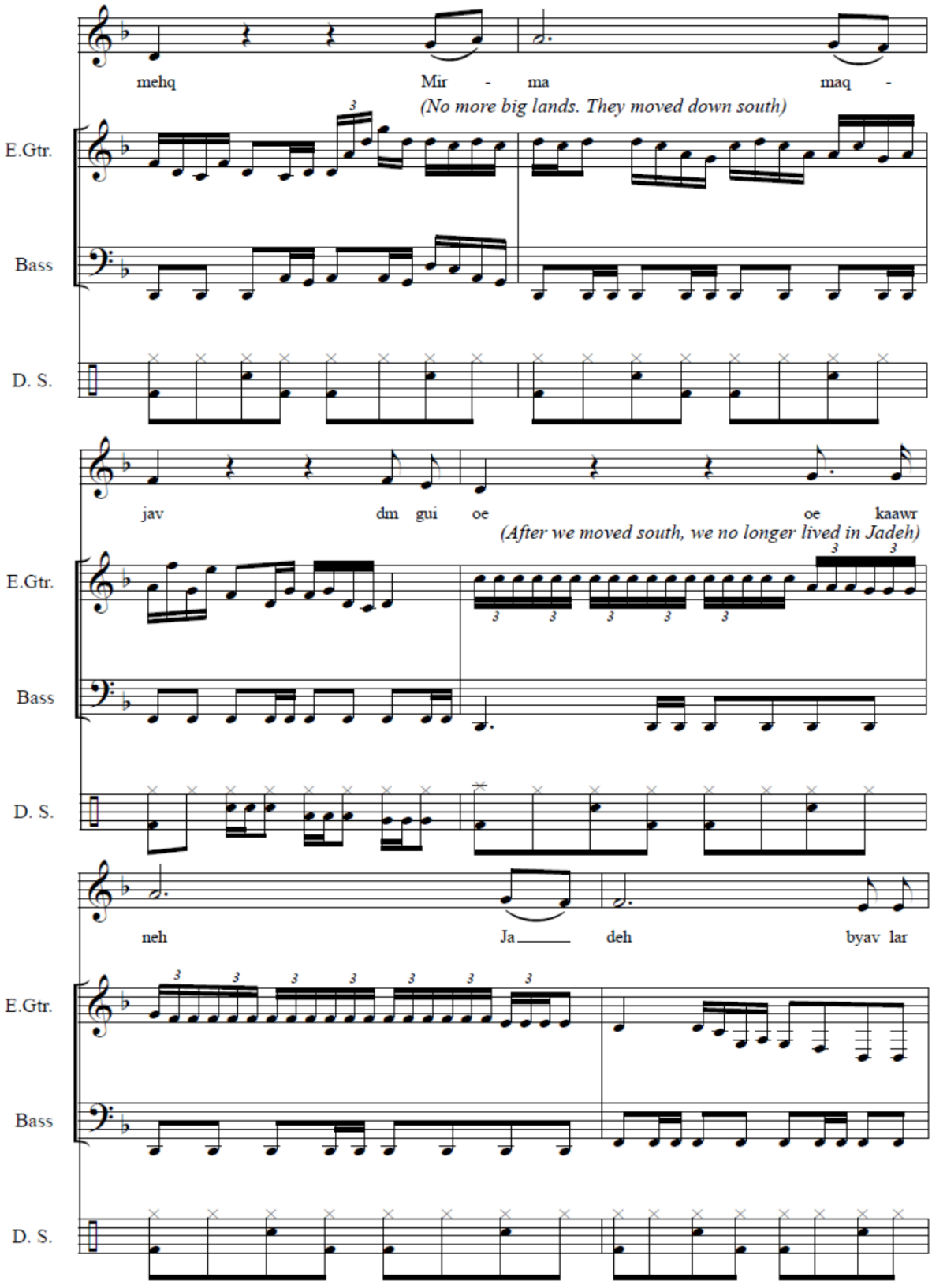

nya oe ka mehq Mir -
(The Akha cannot stay. They must move down south)
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.
ma maq - jav dm gui
(No more big lands. They moved down south)
E.Gtr.
6
Bass
D. S.
oe oe kaawr neh Ja - deh byav lar
3
(After moving south, the Akha no longer live in Jadeh)
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.

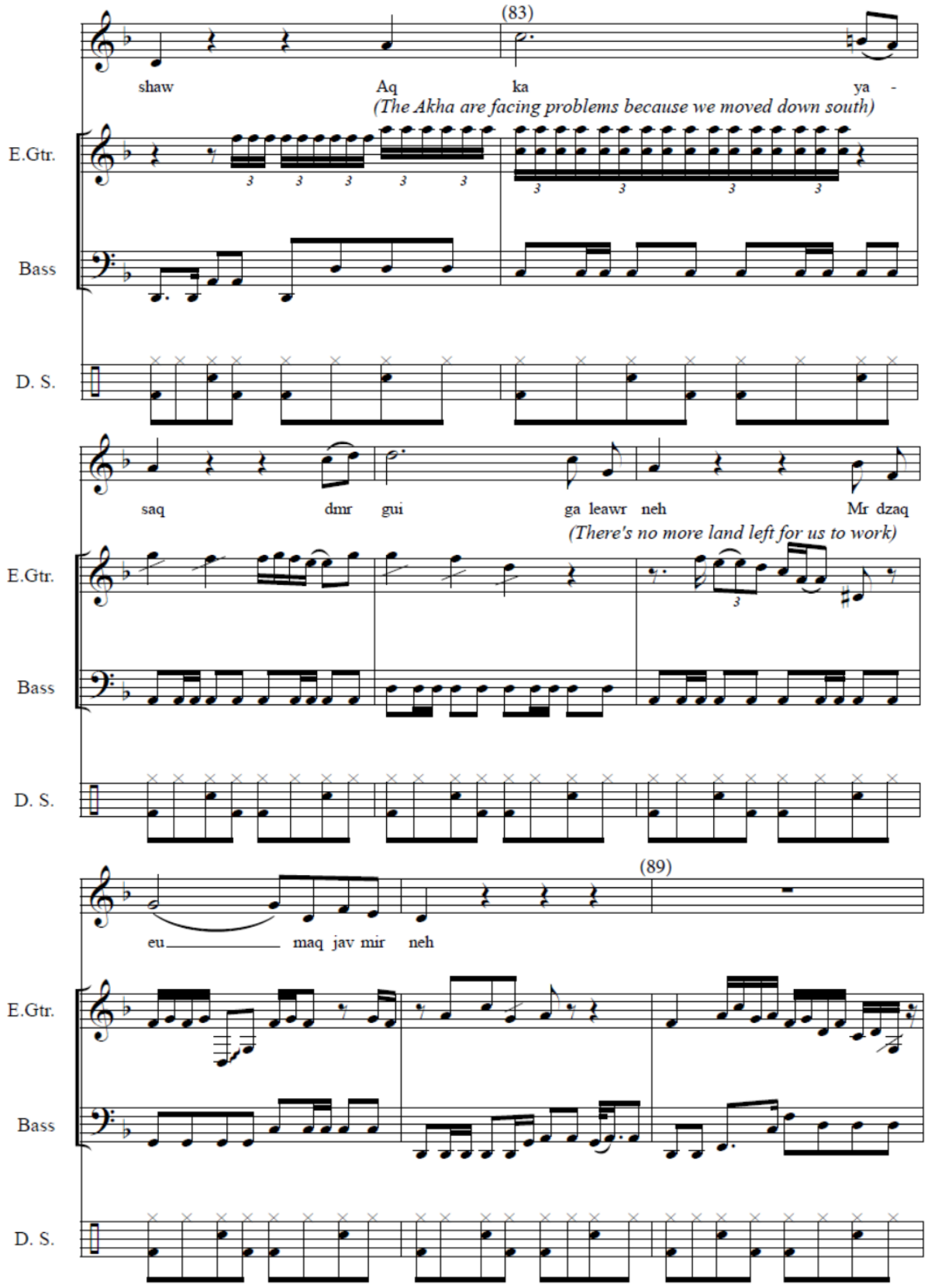

(39)
shaw Aq ka ya - saq dmr
(The Akha now face problems)
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.
gui ga leawr neh Mr dzaq
(because we moved south)
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.
(44)
eu maq jav mir neh
(There's no more land left for us to work)
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.

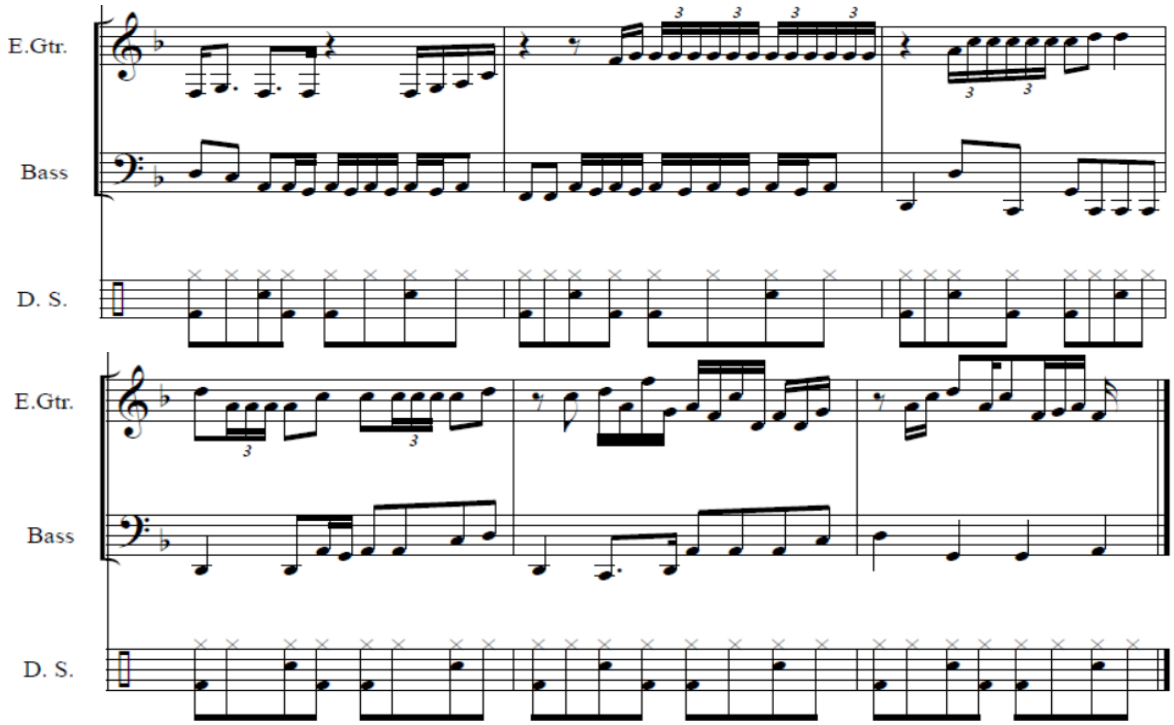

E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.
3
3
3
3



*the lyrics repeat the second stanza here, in typical *Luk Thung* song structure.


mehq
Mir - ma
maq -
(No more big lands. They moved down south)
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.
jav
dm gui oe
oe kaawr
(After we moved south, we no longer lived in Jadeh)
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.
neh
Ja
deh
byav lar
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.


(83)
shaw Aq ka ya -
(The Akha are facing problems because we moved down south)
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.
saq dmr gui ga leawr neh Mr dzaq
(There's no more land left for us to work)
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.
(89)
eu maq jav mir neh
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.

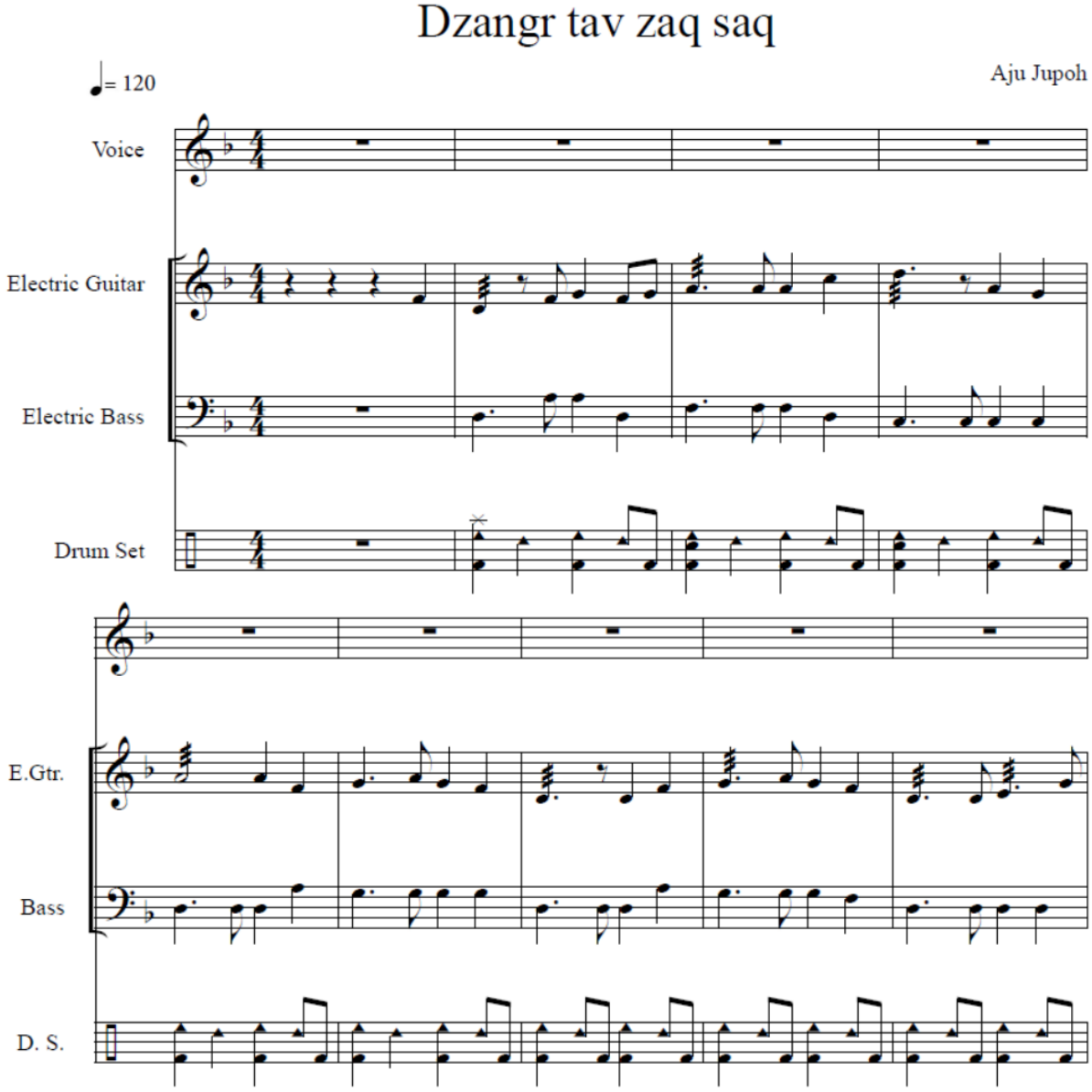


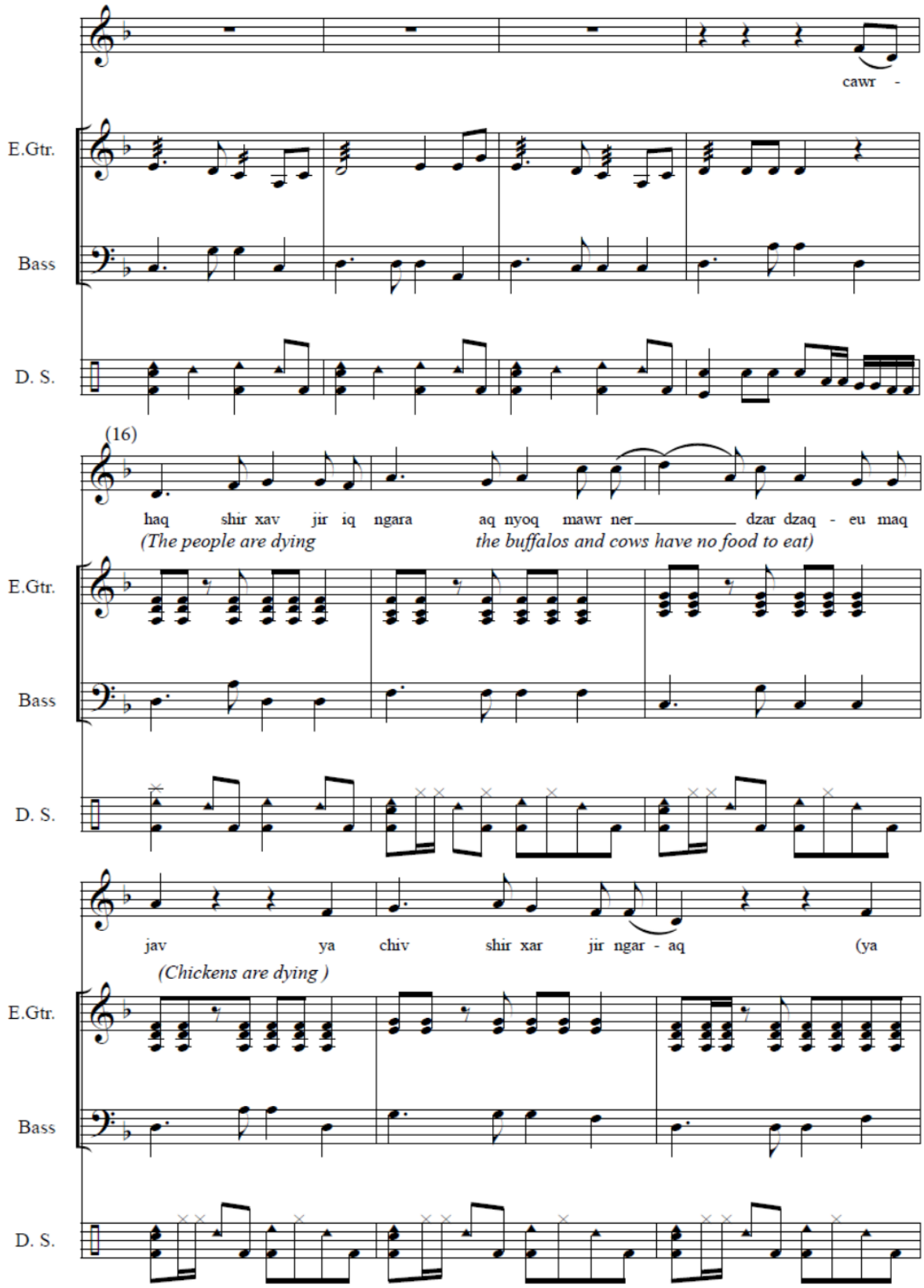
This piece was one of the featured songs, an interstitial in the film *Virtual Borders*, which traced the steps of Akha leaders going from Chiang Rai to China for an international conference of Akha-Hani people. Throughout the movie (and conference) a transnational radio broadcast of the proceedings emanated from Chiang Mai and was picked up by Akha villagers in Laos, Vietnam, Burma, China, and Thailand (some in villages with no electricity but with battery powered radios). In one scene, in between broadcasts of the feed sent from China, more mundane messages are being sent: a village in Burma has ordered a headdress from another village in Chiang Rai and would like to check up on their order. These connections are being made explicitly and intentionally, and the filmmakers themselves acknowledge their role in this process, saying:

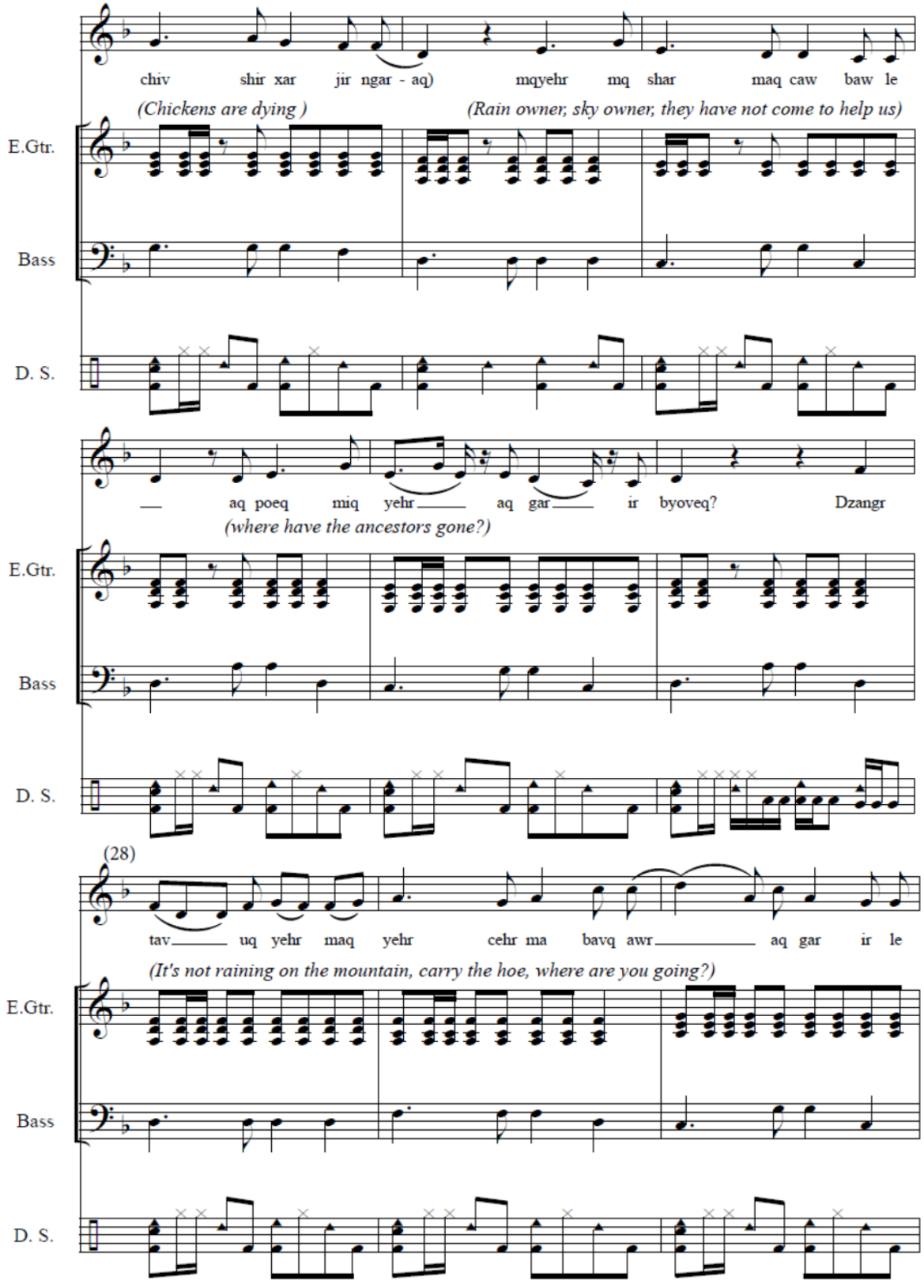
> More often than not, documentary filmmakers attempt to minimize the influence of their presence. This project, however, is driven by the idea that the dynamics of media are not only able to capture a story but also create a situation from which the people to be documented will continue to profit: the documentary introduces the internet as temporary and effective solution to provide an affordable audio link for a people divided by international borders. The creation of the 'internet radio station' in this cultural setting will also allow the Akha to explore the appropriateness of this technology, as an affordable and legal alternative to the problems they face in relying on their oral culture in the face of an ever more embracing global culture (Luksch 2003)

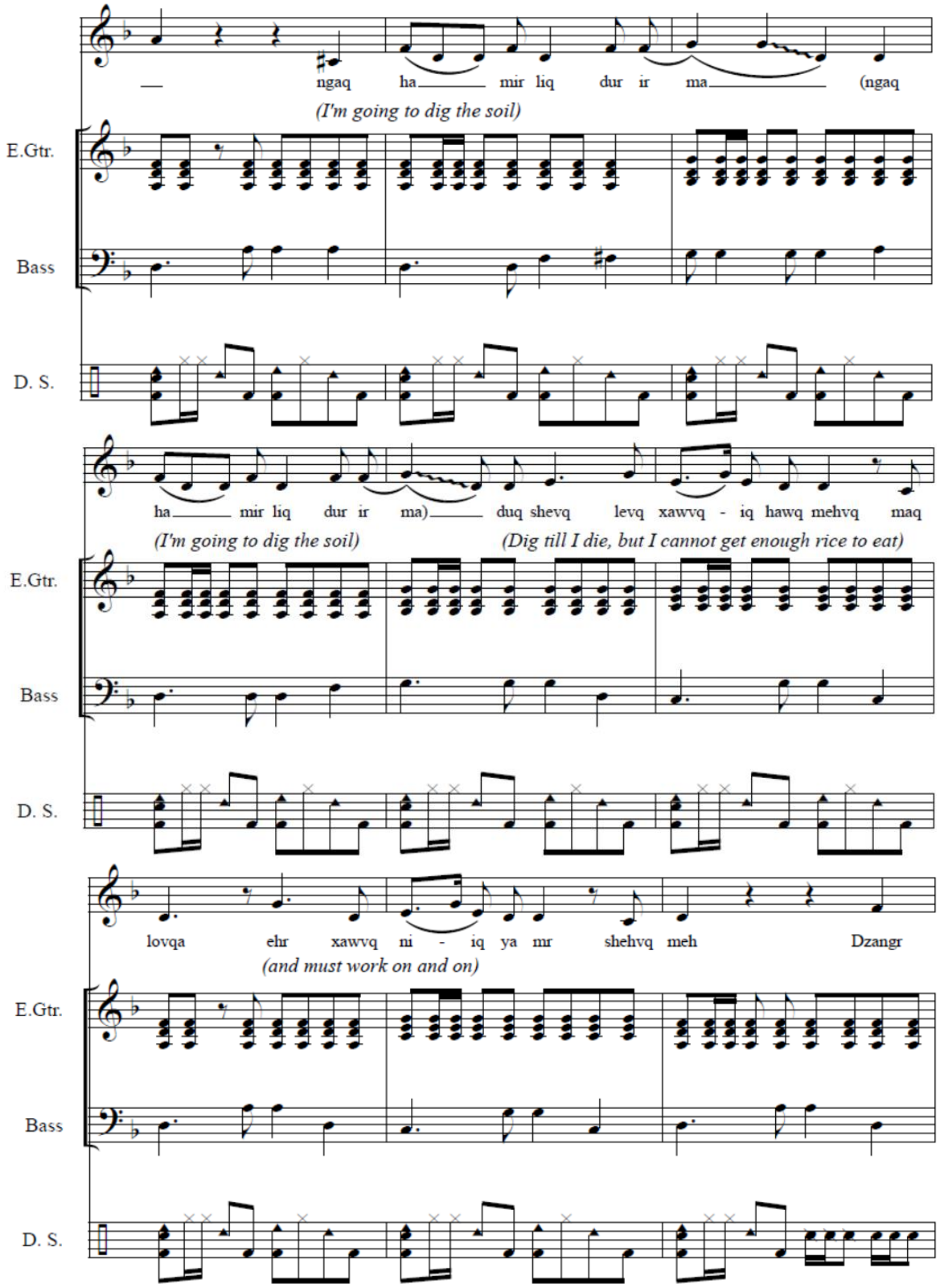
Collaborative partnerships such as these, especially through NGOs, have become a common occurrence for Akha activists and neo-traditionalists. Radio feeds led to local broadcasts, which introduced recording technology, all through NGO presence. The Akha AFECT band was thus created, giving modern voice to neo-traditional messages (Alting von Geusau 2001: 90-91).

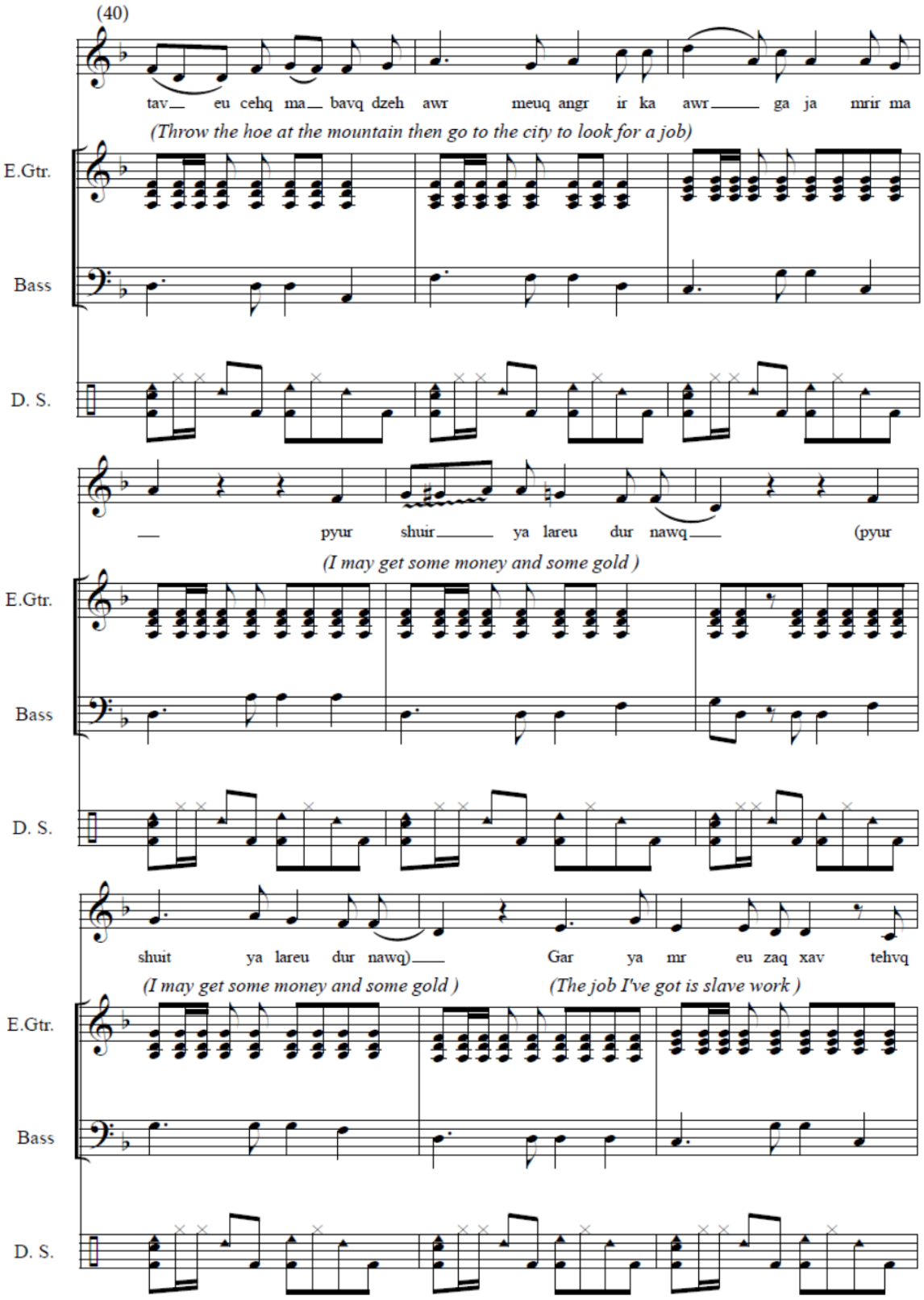
Chapter 5, Appendix 1c. "Dzangr Tav Zaq Saq (Poor Mountain People)" tells the sad, autobiographic experience of Aju and Doi Tung, but the message is typical enough to be generic. Here, spaces are enclosed, villages are consolidated, agricultural work is insufficient, and the trek down to the lowland to be educated and civilized on others' terms is the outcome (as is appropriation of these new tools). The upbeat rhythm is typical of *phleng phuea chiwit*, especially with the driving beat of the wood block/cowbell (the triangular note head in the set below). [CD Track 32]

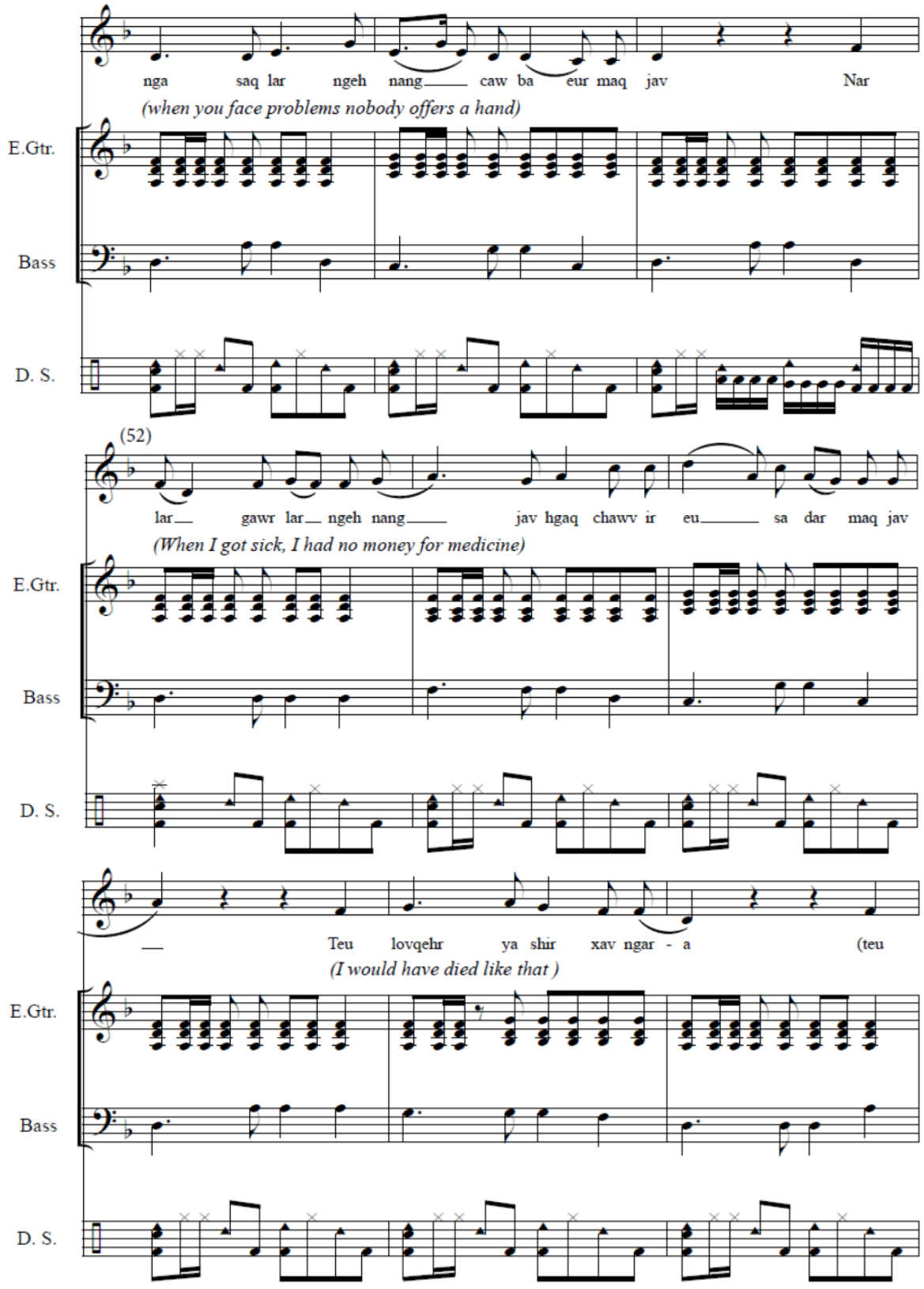


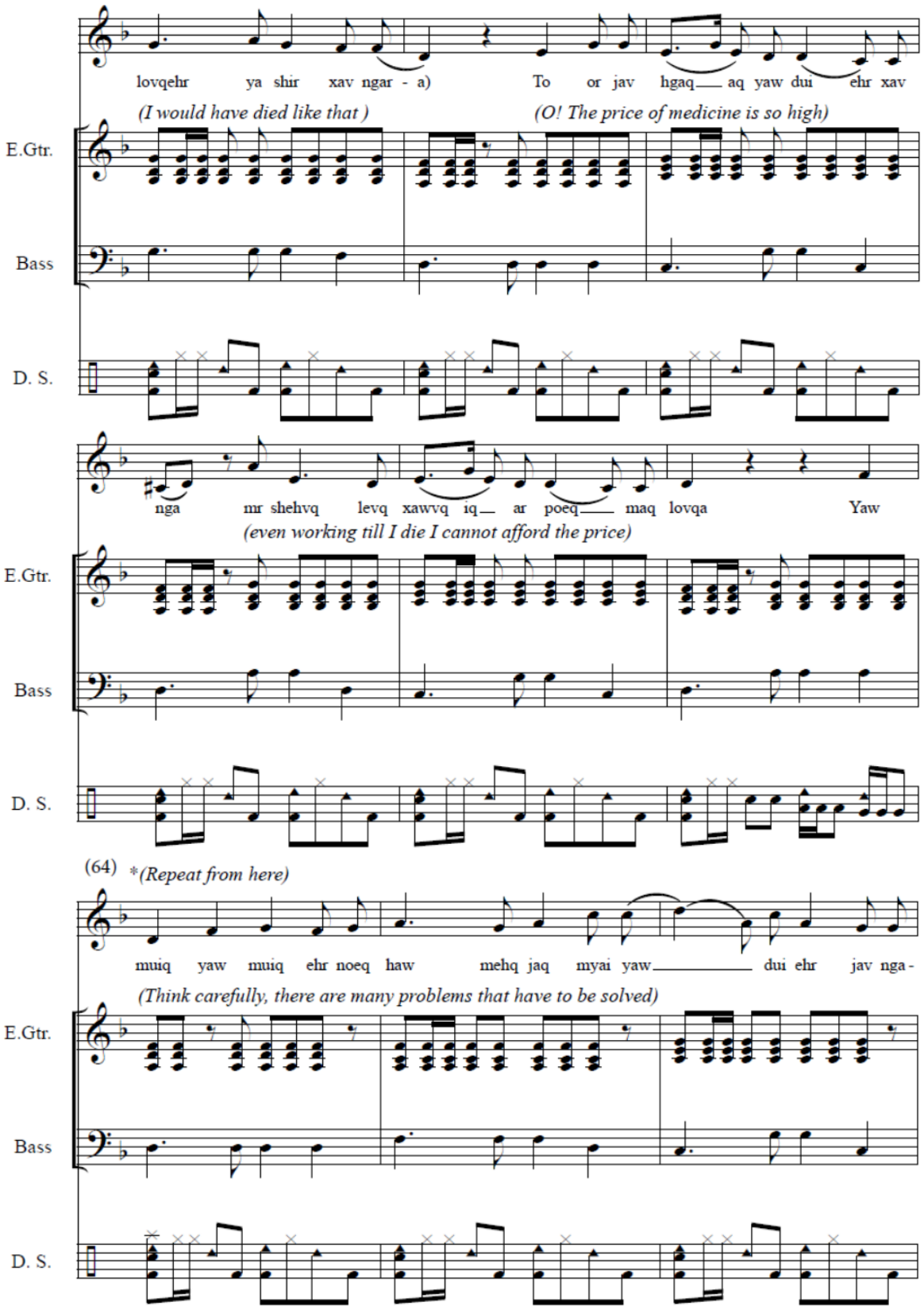

cawr -
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.
(16)
haq shir xav jir iq ngara aq nyoq mawr ner dzar dzaq - eu maq
(The people are dying the buffalos and cows have no food to eat)
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.
jav ya chiv shir xar jir ngar - aq (ya
(Chickens are dying)
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.

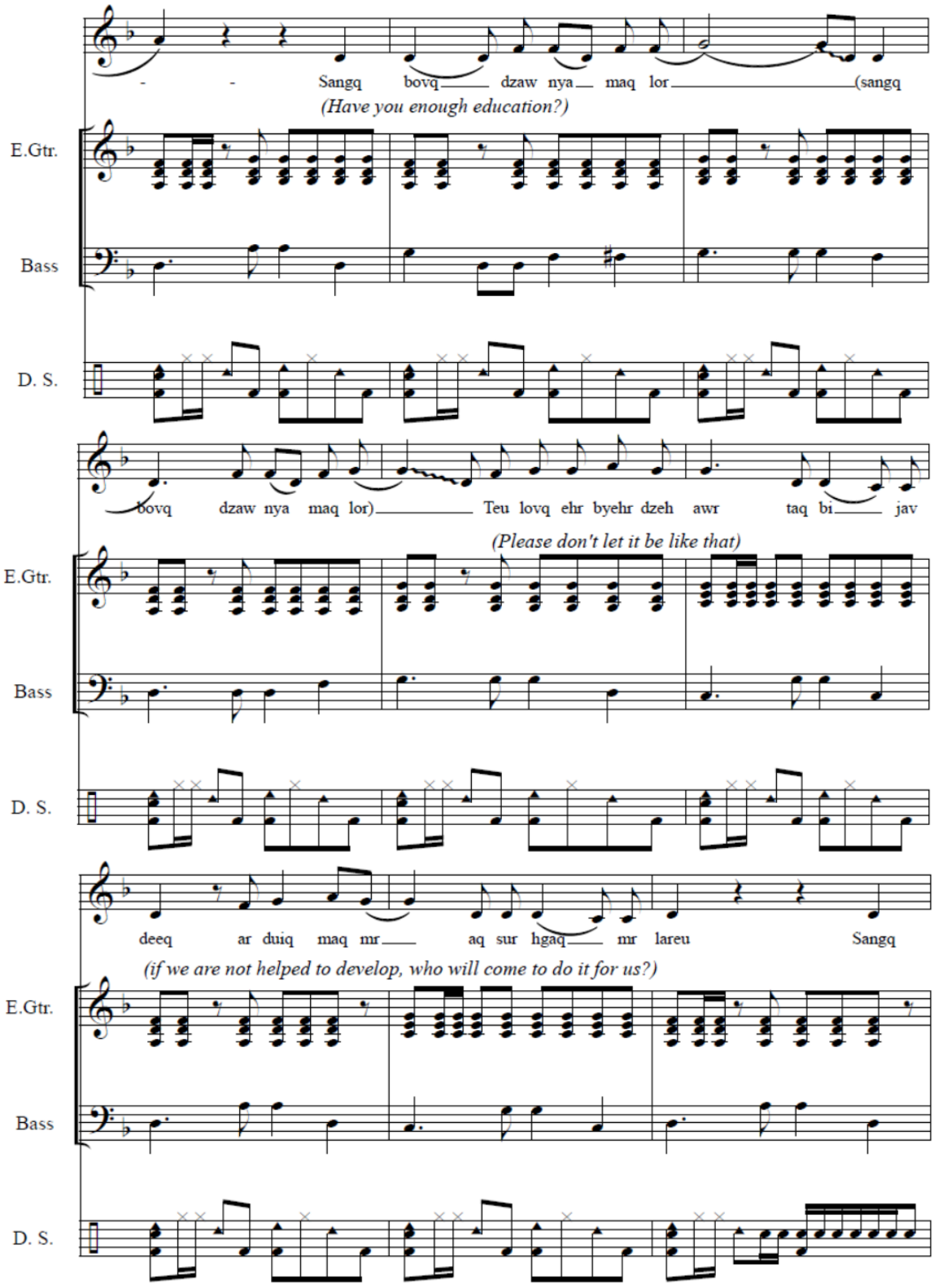

chiv shir xar jir ngar - aq) mqyehr mq shar maq caw baw le
(Chickens are dying)
(Rain owner, sky owner, they have not come to help us)
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.
— aq poeq miq yehr — aq gar — ir byoveq? Dzangr
(where have the ancestors gone?)
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.
(28)
tav — uq yehr maq yehr cehr ma bavq awr — aq gar ir le
(It's not raining on the mountain, carry the hoe, where are you going?)
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.

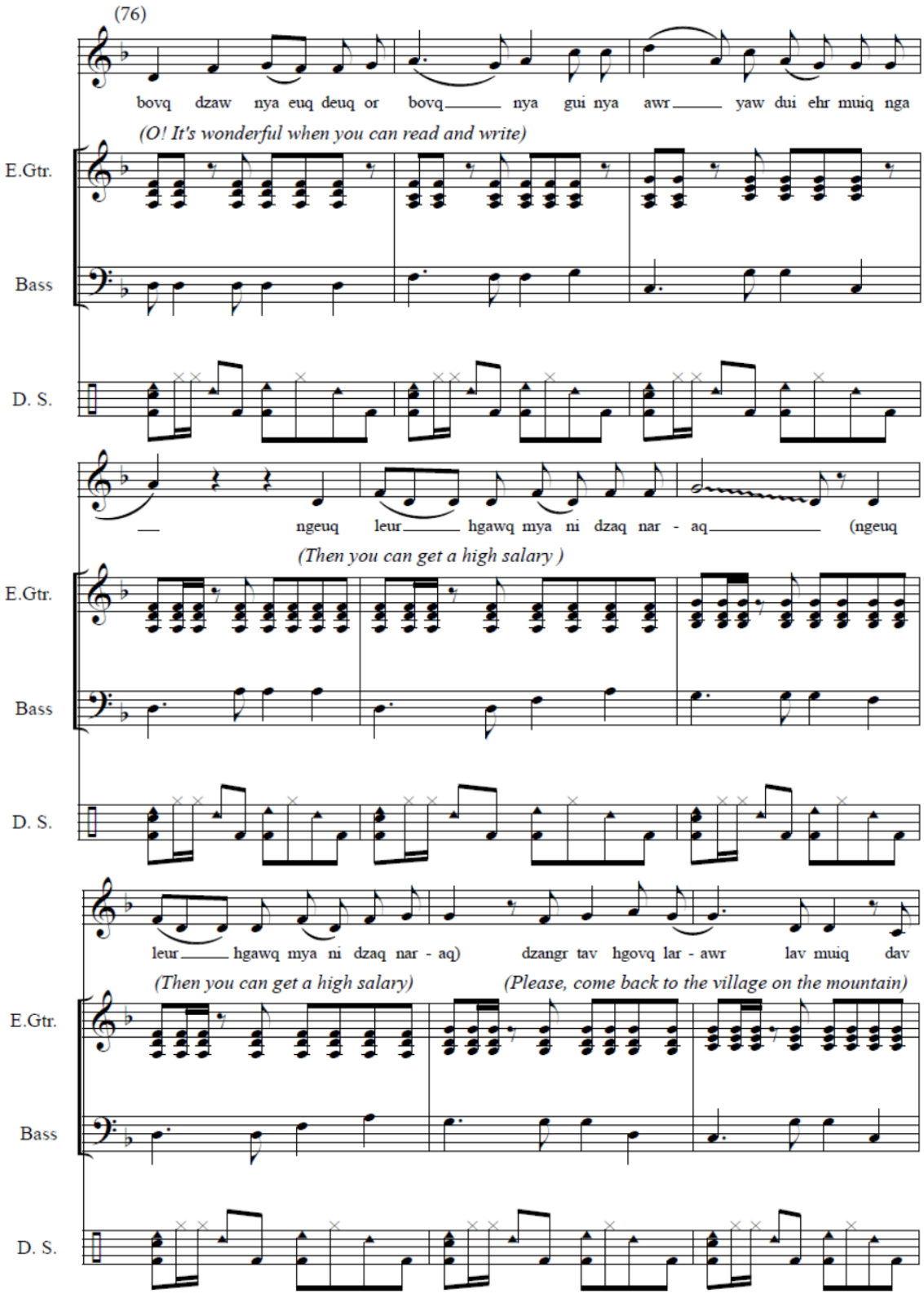

ngaq ha mir liq dur ir ma (ngaq
(I'm going to dig the soil)
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.
ha mir liq dur ir ma) duq shevq levq xawvq - iq hawq mehvq maq
(I'm going to dig the soil)
(Dig till I die, but I cannot get enough rice to eat)
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.
lovqa ehr xawvq ni - iq ya mr shehvq meh Dzangr
(and must work on and on)
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.

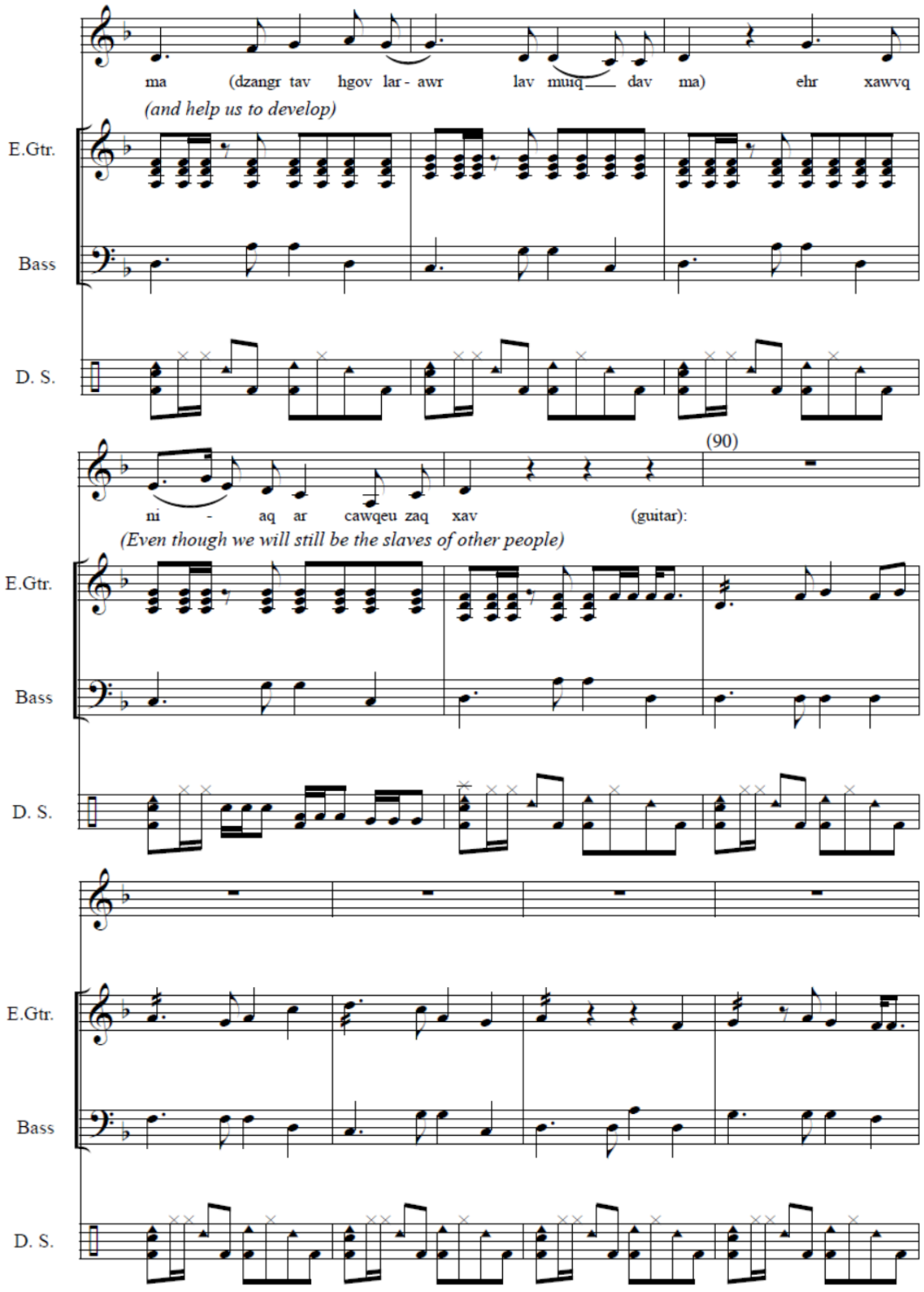

(40)
tav eu cehq ma bavq dzeh awr meuq angr ir ka awr ga ja mrir ma
(Throw the hoe at the mountain then go to the city to look for a job)
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.
pyur shuir ya lareu dur nawq (pyur
(I may get some money and some gold)
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.
shuit ya lareu dur nawq) Gar ya mr eu zaq xav tehvq
(I may get some money and some gold)
(The job I've got is slave work)
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.

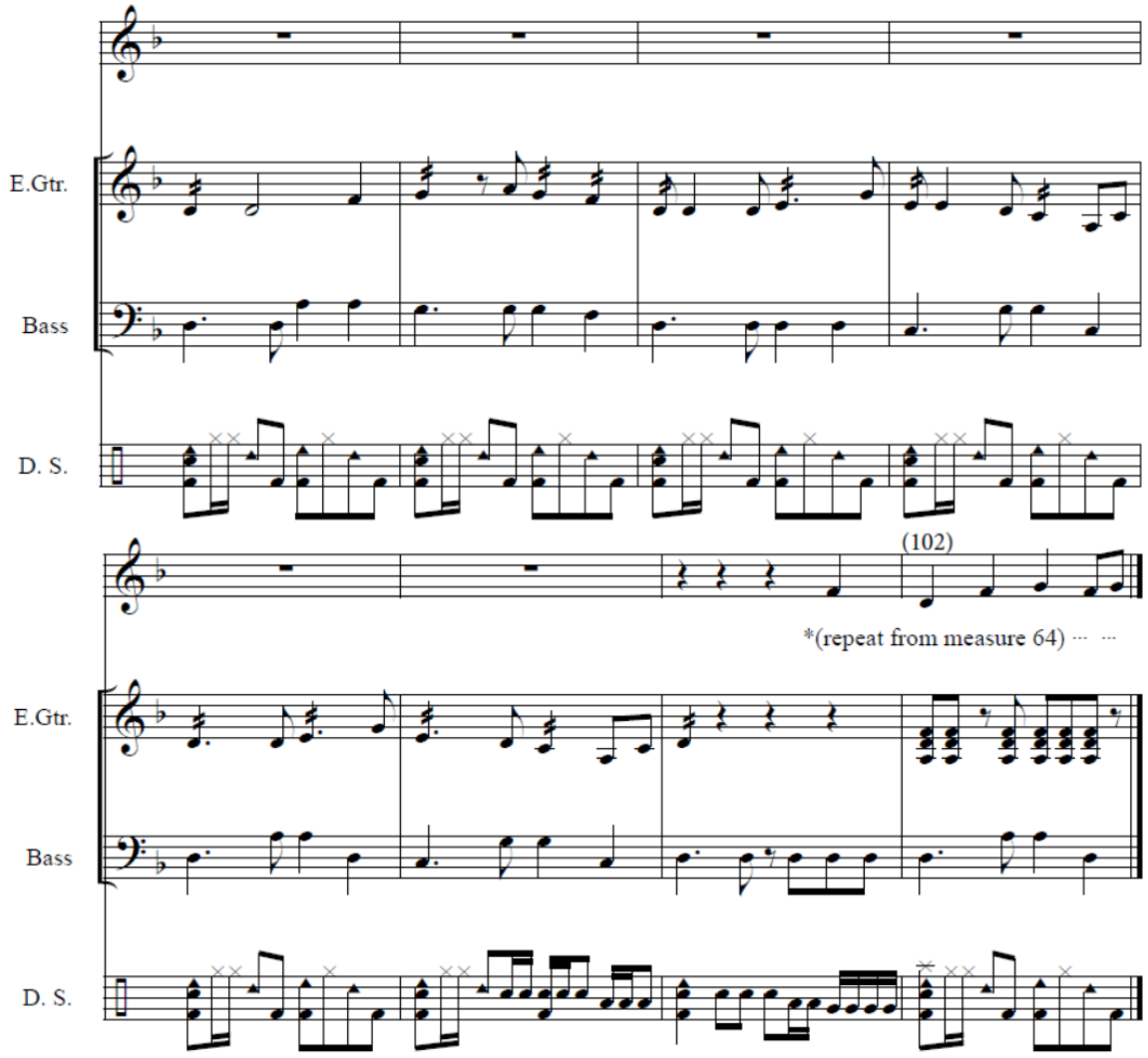

nga saq lar ngeh nang caw ba eur maq jav Nar
(when you face problems nobody offers a hand)
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.
(52)
lar gawr lar ngeh nang jav hgaq chawv ir eu sa dar maq jav
(When I got sick, I had no money for medicine)
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.
Teu lovqehr ya shir xav ngar - a (teu
(I would have died like that)
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.


lovqehr ya shir xav ngar - a) To or jav hgaq aq yaw dui ehr xav
(I would have died like that) (O! The price of medicine is so high)
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.
nga mr shehvq levq xawvq iq ar poeq maq lovqa Yaw
(even working till I die I cannot afford the price)
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.
(64) *(Repeat from here)
muiq yaw muiq ehr noeq haw mehq jaq myai yaw dui ehr jav nga -
(Think carefully, there are many problems that have to be solved)
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.


Sangq bovq dzaw nya maq lor (sangq
(Have you enough education?)
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.
bovq dzaw nya maq lor) Teu lovq ehr byehr dzeh awr taq bi jav
(Please don't let it be like that)
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.
deeq ar duiq maq mr aq sur hgaq mr lareu Sangq
(if we are not helped to develop, who will come to do it for us?)
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.


(76)
bovq dzaw nya euq deuq or bovq nya gui nya awr yaw dui ehr muiq nga
(O! It's wonderful when you can read and write)
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.
ngeuq leur hgawq mya ni dzaq nar - aq (ngeuq
(Then you can get a high salary)
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.
leur hgawq mya ni dzaq nar - aq) dzangr tav hgovq lar - awr lav muiq dav
(Then you can get a high salary)
(Please, come back to the village on the mountain)
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.


ma (dzangr tav hgov lar - awr lav muuq dav ma) ehr xawvq
(and help us to develop)
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.
(90)
ni - aq ar cawqeu zaq xav (guitar):
(Even though we will still be the slaves of other people)
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.
E.Gtr.
Bass
D. S.



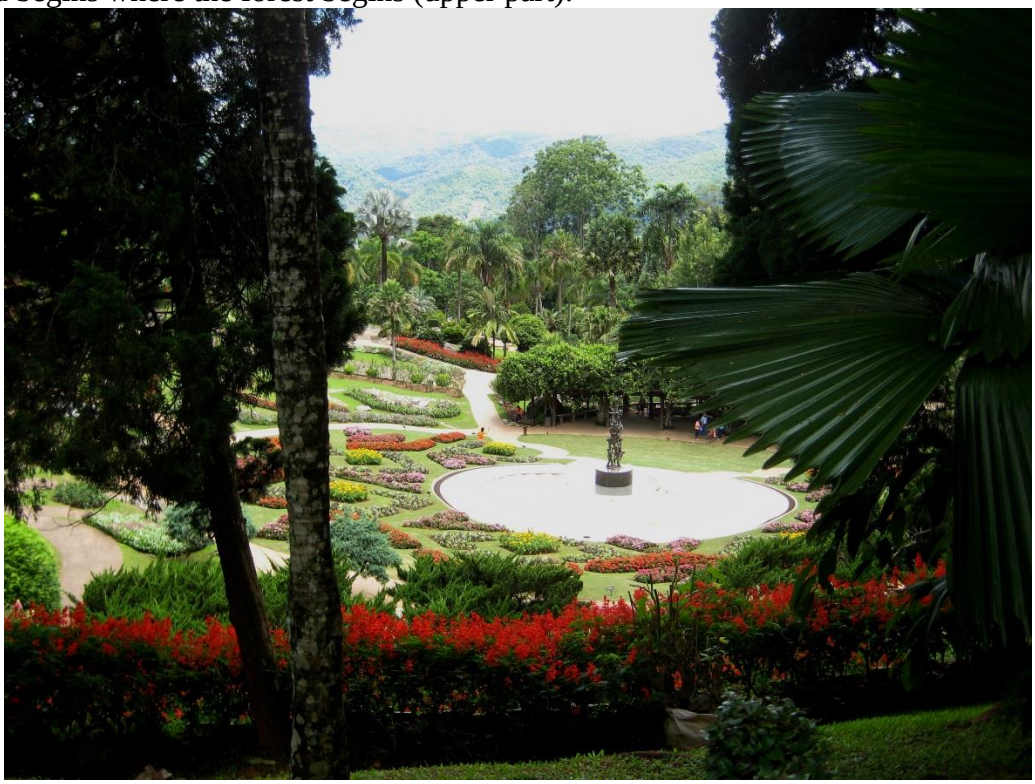
By one set of numbers and from one viewpoint (i.e., the official state version), Doi Tung is a success story, praised by the United Nations as a model of sustainable development, poverty alleviation, and drug eradication (Mogg 11). Scholars and NGOs, on the other hand, continue to point to the state powers given free rein to remove villagers and villages by force if necessary, if they are found conducting illegal activities on land newly claimed for conservation, and the "military option" is not off the table (Anan 1998: 72). In these portraits, poor highlanders are classified as forest destroyers and forcefully evicted in the name of national forest conservation, paving the way (pun intended) for lowland businesses entities to set up shop in the name of "national development" (73).

Chapter 5, Appendix 2. Pictures from Doi Tung and elsewhere.

Aju poses in front of the sign at *Mae Fa Luang* garden that bars entrance to his birthplace.

Swiddens on the Burma (Shan state) side of the hill. Lush pine tree forests mark the Thai side.

Eco/agro-border: Grasses and secondary forest mark the Akha/Lahu swiddens (lower part), Thailand begins where the forest begins (upper part).



The immaculately manicured Mae Fa Luang royal project gardens now cater to lowland tourists.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS (All translated terms are from central Thai unless otherwise noted below)

Ahkazang	(Akha) the "Way" of the Akha, traditional religious practice
Ai	(Northern Thai) informal referential title for a man, i.e. *Ai* Jaran
Ajaan	Respectful title for learned scholar, teacher, religious leader
Bau chung	(Akha) bamboo stamping tubes
Chao Khao	A not-so-politically correct term for highland dwellers (literally "hill tribe) that is still used regardless
Charoen	Progress
Chaw da	(Lahu) Fun, enjoyment, to enjoy
Chedi	Stupa in a Thai Buddhist temple complex
Dawk Bua-tawng	Sunflowers found in northern Thailand's high elevations only
Dehaw	(Akha) dance circle
Doi Lang Mueang	Local/pre-administrative name for what is now *Ban Musoe* villages
Dzo ma	(Akha) Ritual specialist
Folksawng Kham Mueang	Northern Thai acoustic folk genre invented by Jaran Manopetch
Gru na gru na	(Karen) vocables typically used at the beginning of a *tehnaku* song
Guifu	(Lahu) village spirit
Guisha	(Lahu) Supreme deity
Hkaw sheh hpa, hkaw sheh ma	(Lahu) Male and female village protector spirits
Isaan	Northwest region of Thailand (mostly ethnically Laotian, or Thai-Lao)
Ja-khue kue	(Lahu) dance circle

Jao	Title for nobility
Kham Mueang	Northern Thai dialect (alternative spelling: *kam mueang*)
Khapu	(Lahu) Sticky rice pounded into a round disc cake
Khlui	Flute
Khru	Respectful term for teacher (traditional, from Sanskrit *Guru*)
Khwae	(Karen) Buffalo horn fitted with free reed
Klawng	General and broad term for any (membranophone) drum
Klo	(Karen) Bronze frog drum
La Je	(Akha) 5-pipe free-reed aerophone with gourd mouthpiece
Luk khaw	vibrato
Luk khrueang	Literally "Half-Child." Offspring of Thai and white foreigner
Luk Thung	Country music genre more typically associated with rural Thailand
Mo-cho	(Karen) master of *tha* poetry and ritual specialist
Monthon	(from "Mandala") Government reform that turned autonomous *mueang* into regional administrative centers with centrally-appointed administrators. Lanna fell under the *Payap* (Northwest) label
Muan	(Northern Thai) Fun, to enjoy, enjoyment
Mu-Hao	(Northern Thai) Literally, "us." I translate this as "We-self" as well
Musoe	(Thai, adopted from Shan) Term for the Lahu, literally means "hunter"
Naw	(Karen) prefix for young woman
Naw	(Lahu) free-reed aerophones made with gourd mouthpieces,

	including the *naw kile* (smaller, higher pitched) and *naw kuema* (larger, lower, for sacred ceremony)
Nowa (Nova)	Popular, and cheap, brand of motorcycle in rural areas
Peh Tu Pa	(Lahu) Literally "The candle burners", a Lahu self-referential term, as they make beeswax candles for ceremonial purposes
Pga k'nyaw	(Karen) Literally "human," a self-referential term for Sgaw Karen
Phaya	Title for a king
Phati	(Karen) respectful title for a colleague
Phleng Phua Chiwit	Literally "Songs for Life." Popular genre of music emphasizing social commentary and driving "folksy-rock" rhythms (example bands: *Carabao, Caravan*)
Phra	Respectful title for religious teachers (mostly monks)
Phu Yai Ban	Village headman
phuenmueang	"Folk" (Can be used to describe music with "traditional" sound)
Pi	In northern Thai, a free-reed aerophone. In Central Thai, refers to double reed aerophone. Both have finger holes.
Pi Mai	New Year
Pin Phia	coconut stick zither traditionally used for courtship in Lanna region
Salaw	2-stringed bowed spike lute with coconut body
Salaw-Saw-Sueng	Northern Thai small ensemble typically consisting of *salaw, sueng, khlui, ching, klawng* (but instruments can be added or subtracted)
Samachik	Council member of Sub-district Administrative Organization

	(SAO)
Sanuk	Fun, enjoyment, to enjoy
Sao	young, unmarried woman; pillar
SAO	Sub-district Administrative Organization, the local mayor's office that provides budgetary support to village projects
Saw	Northern Thai sing-speech song in *Kham Mueang* dialect
Saw-tru	(Karen) 2-stringed fretless bowed tube zither constructed from bamboo joint
Shi Nyi	(Lahu) Great Merit days
Sueng	plucked 4 string chordophone (2 pairs of double course strings, fretted)
Tambon	Sub-district, administrative collection of towns and villages (similar to the American equivalent of a County)
Tha	(Karen) 7-syllable poetic couplets used to pass on Karen oral tradition and knowledge
Thamachat	Natural, nature
Than Samai	To be modern, up with the times
Tehnaku	(Karen) 6 (or more) stringed arched harp played by Karen people
Ten Ja-Khue	(Thai/Lahu) term for new year dance
Thra	(Karen) teacher
To bo pa	(Lahu) Village priest
Tue	(Lahu) 3-stringed fretless plucked chordophone
Uean	vocal ornamentation

Watthanatham	Culture
Yang	(Northern Thai) term for the Karen people
Yo	(Karen) term for outside invaders/plunderers who took away the land of the Karen and Lawa people

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Office of Research Compliance
Human Studies Program

UNIVERSITY of HAWAI'I® MĀNOA

May 14, 2013

TO: Benjamin Fairfield
Principal Investigator
Music (Ethnomusicology)

FROM: Denise A. Lin-DeShetler, MPH, MA
Director

SUBJECT: CHS #21257- "Regional Identity and Music in Northern Thailand"

This letter is your record of the Human Studies Program approval of this study as exempt.

On May 14, 2013, the University of Hawai'i (UH) Human Studies Program approved this study as exempt from federal regulations pertaining to the protection of human research participants. The authority for the exemption applicable to your study is documented in the Code of Federal Regulations at 45CFR 46.101(b)(Exempt Category 2).

Exempt studies are subject to the ethical principles articulated in The Belmont Report, found at http://www.hawaii.edu/irb/html/manual/appendices/A/belmont.html.

Exempt studies do not require regular continuing review by the Human Studies Program. However, if you propose to modify your study, you must receive approval from the Human Studies Program prior to implementing any changes. You can submit your proposed changes via email at uhirb@hawaii.edu. (The subject line should read: Exempt Study Modification,) The Human Studies Program may review the exempt status at that time and request an application for approval as non-exempt research.

In order to protect the confidentiality of research participants, we encourage you to destroy private information which can be linked to the identities of individuals as soon as it is reasonable to do so. Signed consent forms, as applicable to your study, should be maintained for at least the duration of your project.

This approval does not expire. However, please notify the Human Studies Program when your study is complete. Upon notification, we will close our files pertaining to your study.

If you have any questions relating to the protection of human research participants, please contact the Human Studies Program at 956-5007 or uhirb@hawaii.edu. We wish you success in carrying out your research project.

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